



**Exploring beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished
container classrooms for Early Childhood Development in
vulnerable communities in the Western Cape**

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ABSTRACT

This study explored beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape. It was conducted on a sample of three ECD centres, one at Philippi and two at Khayelitsha. Key informants at each centre included the Principal, two teachers, three community leaders and a focus group of up to six parents. The study used the qualitative approach and employed a purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview schedules, developed in line with the research objectives, were used to guide the interviews.

The study revealed that the container classrooms were safer and healthier ECD facilities compared to the shacks previously used. They were used as childcare and early learning facilities and also for community activities. Challenges experienced in using container classrooms were around maintenance of the structures and intermittent funding; while measures considered essential in enhancing usage of container classrooms included the provision of spacious classrooms; supporting facilities (toilets and kitchen); creating a stimulating play space around the container, and greater stakeholder participation in the running of the centres.

The research makes the following recommendations:

- i. That further research be done towards an understanding of the extent, nature and impact of the container facilities concept at national level;
- ii. To Breadline Africa that community involvement in the monitoring process be enhanced and to respond to the need to adjust the physical structures to enhance durability and withstand extreme weather conditions; and
- iii. To the Department of Social Development to review its funding strategies and to consider investing in infrastructure in low socio-economic communities as a way of ensuring availability of acceptable standards of ECD centres for poor children.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|--|
| BLA | Breadline Africa |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| DSB | Department of Social Development |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| ECE | Early Childhood Education |
| ECERS | Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale |
| EFA | Education for All |
| HSRC | Human Sciences Research Council |
| NICHD | National Institute of Child Health and Human Development |
| NIP-ECD | National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development |
| NPOs | Not-for-Profit Organisations |
| RSA | Republic of South Africa |
| SAIMDC | South African Index of Multiple Deprivations on Children |
| UCT | University of Cape Town |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This study explores beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape. It is based on a container refurbishing initiative by Breadline Africa (BLA), a South African-based charity that aims to break the cycle of poverty through assisting community projects (BLA, 2007). Motala (2010:9) acknowledges that a “rich tapestry of innovations” have characterised ECD provisioning in home and community-based centres, largely implemented by the non-profit sector through donor funding. This initiative by BLA is a response to the need for improved infrastructure in home and community-based ECD centres which have “a crying need for speedy solutions to the problems of poverty” (BLA, 2012). BLA’s interventions focus mainly on children, premised on the awareness that strategic early learning experiences lay a solid educational foundation for a better life (BLA, 2013a). In this opening chapter, the background to the study is given, which includes the context, rationale, significance and the main objectives of the research. A section on clarification of key concepts is also included.

1.1 Context of the study

Pence & Nsamenang (2008), in their working paper on ECD in sub-Saharan Africa, argue that the international early childhood community has never enjoyed such high levels of support and visibility as currently prevails. Prioritised in the Education For All (EFA) goals, the first of the six internationally agreed education goals is targeted at expanding and improving early childhood care and education, with particular emphasis on the services for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. In South Africa, “the State has obligated itself to provide many Early Childhood Development (ECD) services by virtue of being a signatory to international and regional agreements ... as well as by the South African Constitution and a number of Acts and policies” (Richter, 2012:20). In essence, the multifaceted ECD has gained “substantial recognition in SA [South Africa country] as a key issue to be addressed, from a multitude of angles: human rights, economic development and the skill crisis, to name a few... [and] has elicited a multi-sectoral response...” (Sherry & Draper, 2012:3).

However, according to Pence & Nsamenang (2008), this is not the full story; there are voices that are not being heard. This is also pointed out by BLA who see the container refurbishing

project in terms of an effort to make a difference and transform the lives of “the poor and often forgotten” communities (BLA, 2013b:1). Pence & Nsamenang (2008) are wary of the notion that children have in fact become a central concern for governments on account of the policies and legislation enacted. Despite the intentions expressed in national legislation, “ECD services in South Africa have yet to become comprehensive, coordinated, provided in an equitable manner, and funded at a level to achieve their objectives” (Richter, 2012:20). The reality is that the majority of young children from poor families do not have access to quality ECD services because many families cannot afford to pay for ECD services for their children (DSD, 2006).

Furthermore, the South African government has not yet taken full responsibility and control of ECD provisioning, which since the apartheid days has largely been done by community and home-based service providers, representing 49% and 34% of the total ECD providers respectively, while school-based sites were estimated at 17% (Porteus, 2004:349). Because of the historical neglect of this sector by government, or what Atmore (1998) refers to as government abdication of responsibility for educare, communities took it upon themselves to offer care and education to pre-school children. The implication is that such community-driven educare centres reflect by-and-large the very poor socio-economic conditions in which these centres are situated. As noted in the 2001 report on the national ECD pilot projects, at one third of the community-based sites, practitioners and learners still use facilities made of mud, wood, tin or pre-fabricated buildings (Department of Education [DoE], 2001a). In 2010, a Unicef study, conducted in three provinces of South Africa, found that community and home-based ECD centres “often have inadequate infrastructure and unsafe classrooms” (Unicef, 2010:vii).

Furthermore, although communities started these centres, they could barely support them because government subsidisation has been “inadequate (or non-existent)” and the parents, whose fees were meant to support the facilities, were often unemployed or earned low wages (Atmore, 1998:3). Therefore, in order to keep these centres running, communities sought support from “non-governmental welfare and development organisations, civic structures, the church, and to a lesser degree the corporate sector” (Atmore, 1998:4). Recent literature attests to the fact that NGOs have to a large extent provided for ECD services in the country, particularly in disadvantaged communities (Ebrahim et al, 2011; Sherry & Draper, 2012). BLA also became involved in the provision of improved infrastructure in community-based

ECD centres. Since 1993, BLA has assisted community-based initiatives with renovated shipping containers for use as community kitchens, libraries/media centres in schools, day-care centres for children and ablution facilities. The project has rolled out to different parts of the country – with an estimated figure of 175 such containers in use in different communities (BLA, 2007). As yet, no evaluation of the impact these containers have made on the lives of community members has been carried out. In a small way, this study partially addresses this ‘evaluation gap’. This research focusses on beneficiary perceptions of the value and benefits that refurbished containers, used as ECD classrooms, have had both for the quality of ECD services and for the surrounding communities.

1.2 Rationale and Significance of the study

The welfare of children in South Africa is provided for in various pieces of legislation, policies and programmes which have been promulgated since 1994. The 1996 South African Constitution makes provision for and enshrines children’s socio-economic rights, the right to basic education and protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation. This study focuses on the child’s right to basic education with specific emphasis on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the implementation of ECD services specifically in vulnerable communities. With the high rates of poverty in South Africa, particularly in low socio-economic townships such as Phillipi and Khayelitsha in the Western Cape where this study was conducted, opportunities for quality care and early education facilities are scarce. To enhance quality ECD services at ECD centres in poverty stricken communities, Breadline Africa (BLA), a South African based charity organization that aims to break the cycle of poverty, started with the use of refurbished container classrooms for ECD services. However, as yet, no evaluation of the impact these containers have made on the lives of community members has been carried out.

The purpose of this study was thus to explore the beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for ECD in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape. More specifically the objectives of the study were to investigate the use of container classrooms with regard to the activities undertaken in them; to understand ECD teachers’ and key informants perceptions on the difference that container classroom(s) have made to the community in which they are situated; to enquire about the challenges experienced by those using container classrooms; and to establish ECD teachers’ and key informants’ perceptions on future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms. A clear goal and

specific objectives were formulated and the study was guided by research questions that correlated with the objectives.

This relevant topic in the field of social development could be seen as a pilot project that precedes a comprehensive survey of all BLA container centres in South Africa. The outcome of this study has thus the potential to influence BLA's policy directives with regard to the future provision of containers for ECD and as such to enhance needed ECD services in vulnerable communities.

1.3 Research topic

Exploring beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for Early Childhood Development in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape

1.4 Main Research questions

1. How have the refurbished containers been used as classrooms for early childhood development?
2. What difference have container classrooms made to the community in which they are situated?
3. What are the challenges experienced by those using container classrooms?
4. What future strategies could enhance the use of container classrooms?

1.5 Research objectives

1. To investigate the use of containers as classrooms with regard to the activities undertaken in them.
2. To understand ECD teachers' and key informants' perceptions on the difference that container classroom(s) have made to the community in which they are situated.
3. To enquire about the challenges experienced by those using container classrooms.
4. To establish ECD teachers' and key informants' perceptions on future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms.

1.6 Clarification of concepts

- ❖ **Early Childhood Development:** An umbrella term which applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2001:iv). Its usage usually refers to Early Child Care and Education (ECCE), a "very important aspect of ECD [encompassing] services and programmes that

provide care and developmentally appropriate educational stimulation for groups of young children in centres and/or in community- or home-based programmes” (Richter, 2012:17). This research will focus on services for children under the age of 5 who do not qualify to access centre-based ECD sites and are therefore, likely to attend community-based as well as home-based services (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008). Centre-based sites only enrol children above the age of 5.

- ❖ **ECD centre/site:** also referred to as an Educare centre, is defined as “Any building or premises maintained or used, whether or not for gain, for the admission, protection and temporary or partial care of more than six children away from their parents” (DSD, 2006:6). It could be a “crèche, a day-care centre for young children, a playgroup, a pre-school, after-school care, etc” (Presidency, 2009:75). In this thesis the terms ECD and Educare centre are used interchangeably. This study focusses on ECD/educare services being rendered in refurbished shipping containers.
- ❖ **Child:** Person under the age of 18 years (DSD, 2001:iii). This research focuses on children below the age of 5 who do not have access to centre-based services and are therefore, likely to access community and home-based centres which are sometimes using refurbished containers as classrooms.
- ❖ **Container Classroom:** In this research, ‘container classroom’ refers to a refurbished second-hand shipping container that has been transformed into an educare classroom.
- ❖ **Vulnerable communities:** The guidelines for ECD services define Vulnerability as “Heightened or increased exposure to risk as a result of one’s circumstances” (DSD, 2006:8). This study refers to communities with low socio-economic status, which are historically disadvantaged and characterised by underdevelopment. The two communities which are the focus of this study (Philippi and Khayelitsha) fit this profile.
- ❖ **Beneficiaries:** Refers to people, (individuals, families or communities) who are recipients of a service. In the case of this research, the term refers to teachers, children, parents and community members who have benefited from these refurbished containers.

1.7 Reflexivity

The researcher undertook this research aware that she did not have adequate experience in the area of ECD, particularly ECD provision in South Africa, having come from another country. Thus she saw a double challenge of getting to know the field, as well as gaining an understanding of an innovative intervention such as that offered by BLA. However, the researcher took on the challenge and gained incalculable knowledge in the course of this research. Furthermore, the researcher encountered language barrier situations where beneficiaries were not able to express themselves in English. The researcher sought the help of an assistant researcher fluent in Xhosa, the language widely spoken in the area, who assisted in overcoming language barriers.

1.8 Chapter headings in this report

The structure of this report can be gleaned from the following outline of the chapter headings:

- Chapter one - Introduction
- Chapter two - Literature review
- Chapter three - Methodology
- Chapter four - Presentation and discussion of findings
- Chapter five - Conclusions and recommendations

1.9 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described the context of the study; outlined the main research questions and objectives; clarified important concepts and terms used in the study; and has given a brief overview of the researcher's reflections about doing such a study (reflexivity). The following chapter presents the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature pertaining to Early Childhood Development (ECD), with a particular focus on ECD provisioning for children less than five years of age who cannot access government subsidised centre-based services due to their age stipulations. It also presents theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. The body of literature reviewed in this chapter was continuously modified since the researcher was determined to present a conceptual framework that incorporated innovative alternatives to ECD facilities. However, although much has been published in the field of ECD in South Africa, the aspect of container classrooms has received very little attention. Apart from a few online articles, no substantive literature on the topic was found. Thus this research on the use of ‘container’ classrooms for ECD fills a gap in the literature. It starts by briefly presenting the socio-economic profiles of the study area.

2.1 The Study Area

The catchment areas for BLA’s interventions in terms of the container project are “very poor communities” (BLA, 2012:1). In South Africa these are usually the communities previously classified as ‘non-white’, which are predominantly black and coloured areas that received the bare minimum in terms of infrastructure and social services in the apartheid era but still suffer from this legacy. This study drew participants from two of these townships in the City of Cape Town: Philippi and Khayelitsha, which have benefitted from the infrastructural injection in the form of the refurbished containers from BLA. Both areas are generally described as poor and ‘informal’ (City of Cape Town, 2007). Children growing up in these areas are therefore, vulnerable because the socio-economic characteristics of these communities shape the composition and quality of local institutions, such as child care and schools. The mission of these educational initiatives focuses on children’s cognitive growth, which in turn influences their achievements later in life (Dupere et al., 2010). A brief discussion ensues on the actual geographical contexts of this study.

2.1.1 Philippi Township

Philippi is a township situated in a low socio-economic area 23 km west of Cape Town. It is one of the largest townships in the city of Cape Town (Anderson, Azari & Van Wyk, 2009). According to the City of Cape Town (2007), most of the people now living in the Philippi Township originally came from the former Ciskei and Transkei homelands. With people from

the rest of South Africa and surrounding townships moving into the area in large numbers, Philippi has gone through several periods of rapid expansion. As a result, the exact size and parameters of Philippi are not known (Anderson, Azari & Van Wyk, 2009). Unemployment levels are high, with about 50% employed largely in trade work and in elementary occupations earning less than R1600 a month; with approximately 80% of residents having educational levels below the Grade 12 matriculation (Anderson, Azari & Van Wyk, 2009).

Like most black South African Townships, the history and development of Philippi is linked to apartheid policies and as a residential area it remains largely underdeveloped. It is made up of seven wards and multiple neighbourhoods. It has approximately 23 informal settlements, consisting of 15,114 shacks (Rodrique, Gie & Haskins, 2006). Philippi is a diverse area with all sorts of housing types, the formal and the informal dwellings side by side, “indeed, they stare each other mercilessly in the face” (City of Cape Town, 2007:4). While 35% of residents live in stand-alone brick structures, some 53% live in shacks, either stand alone or in backyards. While 51% rely on electricity, some 45% use paraffin for lighting. Only 8% of residents have water within the dwelling. The sanitation statistics include 16% who use a bucket system and 24% who have no sanitation facilities whatsoever (Ibid).

2.1.2 Khayelitsha

Khayelitsha, the largest African township in Cape Town, is located 36 km from the City and forms part of the City of Cape Town’s Metro South East Region, commonly known as Cape Town’s poverty trap (Ndingaye, 2005). Although the township is composed of both formal and informal housing, it is predominantly a shack settlement that traces its history to the colonial, and apartheid legacy of racial segregation (Ndingaye, 2005). “As a result of the apartheid racist design and gross neglect with regards to service delivery and economic development, Khayelitsha is one of the most poverty stricken areas in the Cape Metropolitan” (Ngxiza, 2011:185). It faces many urbanisation challenges such as the over-crowding of people in small spaces, a situation that inevitably poses “serious health, safety and environmental problems for the community” (Ngxiza, 2011:185).

The township is home to “approximately 900,000 people” (Ngxiza, 2011:185). Even with a population of mixed socio-economic levels, “Khayelitsha manifests a poverty profile [because of the] high levels of unemployment, low household income, underdevelopment and lack of economic base due to spatial dislocation and historical neglect” (Ngxiza, 2011:182).

In terms of the extent of ECD provisioning in the two townships, no accurate figures could be obtained. The DSD only accounts for registered centres and could therefore not be used as an indication of the numbers of ECD centres in the areas. As such it can be noted that various legislation and policies influence the course of ECD in South Africa. The following section discusses some key policies and pieces of legislation.

2.2 Government Legislation and Policy

The welfare of children in South Africa is provided for in various pieces of legislation, policies and programmes which have been promulgated since 1994. The 1996 Constitution makes provision for and enshrines children's socio-economic rights, the right to basic education and protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation. Significant legislature includes the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 as amended by Act No 41 of 2007; White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997; Education White Paper [5] on ECD, 2001; Expanded Public Works Programme – ECD, 2004 among others. For purposes of this research, a particular focus will be on the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development (NIP-ECD) of 2005 and the Guidelines for ECD Services of 2006.

2.2.1 National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development (NIP-ECD)

The NIP-ECD presents an integrated plan for the birth-to-four age cohort. It was a response to the “fragmented and uncoordinated service provision in the ECD sector” where different departments addressed young children's needs using sector-specific policies and legislation (RSA, 2005:6). The aim and vision of the NIP-ECD is to “create an environment and opportunities where all children have access to a range of safe, accessible, high quality early childhood development programmes” (RSA, 2005:11). The integrated approach entails providing children with birth registration, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, psychosocial care, early learning, and protection, together with the strengthening of the capacity of communities and improving access to basic services at the local level. It recognises the role of the non-profit sector in ECD as initiators of most early learning sites in the country.

The NIP-ECD recognises community and informal ECD settings as places of care, particularly for the “poor and vulnerable children from birth to four” (RSA, 2005:13). The main focus of the NIP-ECD is on principles of redress and equity, holding that government should act as the “key agent for levelling the playing fields for the historically disadvantaged majority of children...by increasing access to ECD programmes ... [and] improving the

quality of such programmes...” (RSA, 2005:7). However, despite this government policy, the Department of Social Development (DSD) outlaws and does not fund ECD sites that are not registered. The failure to register these sites has been attributed to lack of funds for upgrading infrastructure to meet government requirements. The situation exacerbates the “inequities in existing ECD provisioning [as well as the] variable quality of ECD services” (RSA, 2005:8).

Thus, while the NIP-ECD recognises the need for infrastructure development, “building, upgrading and renovation of formal and informal ECD centres, and the improvement of the provision of water and sanitation” (RSA, 2005:13), the practical aspect of how infrastructure development will be implemented is not mentioned anywhere in the document, leaving the question open as to whose responsibility it is to undertake the recommended infrastructural development. Furthermore, there is to date no proactive government strategy in place to facilitate the registration process of ECD centres.

2.2.2 Guidelines for ECD services

The guidelines for ECD services were drawn up and published by the DSD in 2006. These guidelines put ECD services into the ‘rights’ perspective by stating that children should have access to “as many resources as possible” to provide for their needs (DSD, 2006:1). This is outlined in one of its main principles that states: “The rights of young children as established in the UN Convention, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child and the South African Constitution must be protected” (DSD, 2006:9). It, however, notes that in South Africa, “many children do not enjoy these rights [despite their being] well protected by the Constitution and laws” (DSD, 2006:11).

The guidelines shed light on the responsibility of the DSD “to ensure that conditions are created for the optimum development of all children and their families through the provision and support of appropriate services” (DSD, 2006:13). These guidelines also advocate for the protection of children from all physical, social, and emotional harm or threat. This is to be achieved through development and support of national policies and legislation on ECD, the setting of minimum standards as well as priorities for the implementation of ECD services, and enhancing integration of ECD services through working with other core departments. The DSD is also responsible for registering ECD centres. The guidelines provide directions for the establishment and registration of a new ECD site but are silent about centres that were in operation prior to 2006 – many of which had been established in poor infrastructure by

communities in the absence of government services. Thus registration and infrastructure are two issues that the South African government needs to address urgently.

2.3 Models/Theoretical Frameworks

The current study could be viewed through a wide range of theoretical lenses. While one could conceptually frame this study in various ways; this study will draw on the capability approach, human security and social exclusion theories. The following section gives an overview of the selected models/theoretical frameworks.

2.3.1 Capability Approach

This research on beneficiary perceptions about the use of container classrooms for ECD can be understood in the context of the Capability Approach (CA). The approach has been defined as “a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society” (Robeyns, 2005:94). Amartya Sen, the author of this CA model, focusses on the expansion of human capabilities as a way of promoting well-being, justice and development (Sen, 1999). This is conceptualised in terms of what Sen sees as the freedom of people to lead the lives they have reason to value, and to enhance the real choices they have (Sen, 1999). In this approach, ‘Capabilities’ refer to “the sets of resources (physical, mental and social) that a person might command and that give rise to various functionings” (Corbridge, 2002:188). The CA also includes the actual opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances, which will give them the freedom to escape deprivations in life (Sen, 1999). Therefore, the approach is two-strand in nature, encompassing abilities and opportunities, also known as agency and evaluative aspects (Corbridge, 2002). With regard to this study, the core activity of the educare centres responds to developing the agency aspect (capabilities) of the children through offering them early childhood learning experiences. Breadline Africa on the other hand enhances the possibility for capabilities to be expanded through providing an actual facility in which children receive care and education. Furthermore, BLA ensures that these facilities meet the minimum standards required for registration in order to receive the required government subsidies.

In the two study areas of Philippi and Khayelitsha, where opportunities for quality care and early education facilities are scarce, Sen’s CA finds a resonance with the creation of the means that promote the development of capabilities. Therefore, providing a safe facility in which children can be educationally prepared is vital for impoverished communities because

early learning offers a springboard into formal schooling. As such, these container education centres go some way in removing “obstacles in their lives so that they have more freedom to live the kind of life that, upon reflection, they have reason to value” (Robeyns, 2005:94). This improves their future employment prospects and constitutes a means to break out of a poverty cycle. The United Nations (2007) emphasizes that children living in households with unemployed parents are most likely to experience unemployment themselves and this may be the case for multiple generations.

2.3.2 Human Security

The human security approach brings to the fore the urgency of addressing “the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who [seek] security in their daily lives ... protection from threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards” (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1994:22). Although definitions vary, human security addresses and envisions a world in which the threat of catastrophic nuclear war between leading states has been replaced by a concern for the well-being of people (Duffield, 2005). With the high rates of poverty in South Africa, particularly in low socio-economic townships such as Philippi and Khayelitsha, “... insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event” (UNDP, 1994:22). The description of the study areas is characteristic of communities in which BLA’s container facilities are set up and used, where “Poverty is the ultimate systemic threat [and] ... If the poor are left hopeless, poverty will undermine societies through confrontation, violence and civil disorder” (Camdessus, 2000 as cited by Thomas, 2001:159). According to Ashley-Cooper (2012), childhood developmental lag and social problems later in life can be prevented if children are provided with quality ECD services early in life: “Early and appropriate provisioning and interventions for children at risk can reverse the effects of deprivation and make it possible for children to grow and develop to their full potential” (Ashley-Cooper, 2012:3).

Education as a resource-sharing mechanism provides all citizens an opportunity to make improvements to their lives. As a key area of intervention, the “preschool phase presents its own window of opportunity ... [that can offset] the far-reaching effects of disadvantage in the early years of life” (Sherry & Draper, 2012:3 citing Engle et al, 2011.). Biersteker (2012:52), a researcher in the area of ECD, indicates that “the failure of timely intervention is apparent in South Africa’s poor schooling outcomes and low skills base”. Provision of quality

opportunities for children therefore, is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and turning it into “massive changes to quality of life and social circumstances that would ensue when individual potential is fully realised through optimal developmental support” (Sherry & Draper, 2012:3) . In this regard, James Wolfensohn, the then World Bank President, in his address to the UN Security Council meeting on AIDS/HIV in Africa (10 January 2000), saw human security in terms of a war against poverty: “When we think about security, we need to think beyond battalions and borders. We need to think about human security, about winning a different war; the fight against poverty” (cited by Thomas, 2001:161). Thus the provision of safe refurbished containers goes a long way in addressing both capabilities as well as security.

2.3.3 Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a theoretical perspective which is in the foreground when participatory development research and practice is being carried out. It refers to the “deprivation and vulnerability” experienced by the community-based and home-based ECD sites in Philippi and Khayelitsha (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2009:39). According to these authors, “social exclusion refers to the fact that, despite welfare and general wealth, there remains a group that is excluded from the mainstream benefits of the society and is prevented in some way from fully enjoying the general prosperity” (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2009:39). This concept and perspective aptly describes the situation in South Africa and elsewhere, where, although government investment in ECD has increased, the majority of vulnerable children who attend unregistered ECD sites cannot benefit from government funding (Motala, 2010). In this context, in a Western Cape study, it was found that “ECD centres in areas where children are most deprived have poorer infrastructure, management and educational programmes. Children most in need are therefore not receiving the level of care and stimulation needed to offset the deprivation they experience at home and in the community” (Biersteker, 2012:55).

The result of this situation is that some children are facing a serious risk of educational failure due to, among other reasons, their poor socio-economic background (Leseman, 2002). This situation limits their chances of competing equally with peers who have, or have had, the opportunity of subsidised ECD services or who have parents who can pay for these services. The likelihood is that the cycle of poverty will be perpetuated because future employment prospects for these children are compromised at this early stage by the poor quality of their

education. This is what Sherry & Draper (2012:2), researchers in childhood cognitive and motor development, imply when they argue that “Poor children, without intervention, are set on a developmental trajectory that continually widens the gap between them and the rich or middle class, setting them up for a lifetime of disadvantage”. ECD provision is crucial because it is said to have “unparalleled potential to equalise opportunities and outcomes for children born into adverse circumstances” (Martin, 2012:2).

Sherry & Draper (2012:2) advocate that “interventions to overcome the effects of deprivations must address the multiple mechanisms through which poverty impacts on child development”. As argued by Ebrahim (2012:5), “you don’t want to squeeze vulnerable children into an environment that further marginalises their development potential”. The intervention by BLA in such a context amounts to more than provision of improved infrastructure; it is a strategy aimed towards social inclusion of children in disadvantaged areas. Social inclusion entails the promotion of equitable access to benefits and services available in society (Gidley et al, 2010). As such, the refurbished containers are likely to contribute to the learning environment of children in many ways and could even be better resourced than other early learning facilities. BLA also enables accessibility to government resources by assisting the sites to meet the requirements for registration. Interventions therefore need to be guided by the principle of access so as to counter the deprivation suffered by many children attending non-centre-based ECD services. “Failure to get services to poor children whose development may be compromised already by poverty represents a double failure to address inequality” (Biersteker, 2012:53).

2.4 The uses of ECD Facilities in Vulnerable Communities

Ebrahim, Killian & Rule (2011:388), in their qualitative study of practices of ECD practitioners in family and community-based ECD programmes that support poor and vulnerable families, argue that ECD centres are important because they play “a supportive role to meet the young child’s rights to health, nutrition, care, education and protection”. The authors illustrate the multiple uses of ECD centres by presenting a survey conducted with 35 ECD service providers in different provinces of South Africa. The survey revealed that many of the programmes had multiple components, among them early stimulation, parent education, home visiting, playgroups and community development projects (Ebrahim, Killian & Rule, 2011). They describe the value of ECD in vulnerable communities as being “especially important given the lack of services, infrastructure and ECD centres” (Ebrahim,

Killian & Rule, 2011:388). Manyike (2012) in his investigation into and assessment of the norms and standards for day care centres (or crèches) for preschool children, found that the same space was used for multiple purposes, such as a play room being used as an eating area, and later on as a storage facility (Manyike, 2012). Penn (2004) defines the educare centres as being spaces where childcare for working mothers is provided; children are prepared for school and develop socialisation skills with peers; and where broader community development activities are hosted and facilitated. From this broad definition one realises the importance of such sites as they impact not only on the children and their parents, but on the community as a whole.

2.4.1 Preparation for formal schooling and childcare relief

Children raised in poor families have a disadvantage when they enter primary school and generally adjust poorly if they have not had an early learning exposure (Evans 1997; DoE, 2001). This is because “they lack the experiences, skills, and knowledge that more affluent peers bring to the school experience. As a result, they do poorly, drop out of school early, and are likely to continue the cycle of poverty” (Evans, 1997:18). ECD becomes critical for such children because it “lays a foundation for success in the schooling system” (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008:185). The period from birth to age six is crucial because the child is “most sensitive to stimulation and nurturing [or the lack of it] for the developing brain” (Olusanya, 2011:476). ECD intervention is a powerful equaliser in the sense that it offers opportunities for children from deprived backgrounds to overcome disadvantages and enable them to compete equitably with peers from better-off backgrounds (Sherry & Draper, 2012; Richter, 2012; Evans, 1997). It serves as the basis for subsequent economic returns at an individual level and the human capital and economic development at the population level (Olusanya, 2011).

Ebrahim, Killian & Rule (2011:388) refer to ECD centres as “hubs of care offering a package of services to households and communities”. These kinds of services are particularly vital for children, families and for communities considering the socio-economic shifts in recent years in South Africa which, when they occur, “encourage mothers to leave home and enter paid jobs [and influence] parents selecting non-parental child care”, as Loeb et al (2004:1) found in a study done in the USA in 2004. ECD therefore fulfils the function of unburdening families from child care duties during the workday hours (Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008). Researchers in early childhood development vouch for the “long-term positive effects on

children's cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes” derived from high quality child care and early intervention programmes (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000:323).

2.4.2 Community services

Home and community-based ECD centres, in addition to caring for children, frequently offer other social services to the community at large, such as “facilitate[ing] access of families to documents and grants, food parcels, referrals to health and social services, and about half include money management/income generation/savings groups/self-help groups or improve food security through gardens” (Motala, 2010:6). Commenting on the benefits of container classrooms to communities, Arnold (2011) indicates that “because the communities are so impoverished, the schools often also become hubs for a variety of neighbourhood events, similar to a recreational or community centre”. Alter (2012) gives an example of a container classroom at a rural school in Vissershok which serves as a classroom in the morning for Grade R and as a small library in the afternoon for the entire Vissershok Primary School. Furthermore, Penn (2004), in her studies on early childhood development in developing countries, adds that the sites become a focus for community development and contribute to improved child rearing practices and children's nutritional status by improving mothers' feeding, health and childcare practices.

However, an under-emphasis of community usage noted from the 2008 ECD audit for the Western Cape found that the majority of ECD facilities (63.7%) used their buildings for the purpose of ECD services only and that only 36.1% used these buildings for purposes ranging from “various educational classes for various age groups to extra-mural activities like ballet, beading, faith-based group meetings and senior citizen gatherings” (DSD, 2009:41). Regardless of the extent of community usage, it can be strongly argued that ECD should be given prominence by all stakeholders, and that governments particularly play a leading role in ensuring that the right of every child to basic education is fulfilled.

2.5 The Container Classroom and the Change Expected

Nair & Radhakrishnan (2004:227), in their global study on governmentally unsupported early childhood development in ‘deprived urban settlements’, such as those in Philippi and Khayelitsha, argue that poverty “has an impact on almost all aspects of life of the urban poor, especially the all-round development of children”. The findings from the South African Index of Multiple Deprivations on Children (SAIMDC) based on the 2001 Census, also show that “the highest inter-domain correlation is between the Income/Material Deprivation Domain

and the Living Environment Deprivation Domain at 0.87” (Wright & Noble, 2009:13), and that “sites located in areas with high SAIMDC scores are likely to be serving children facing a number of risks – particularly those associated with poverty” (HSRC, 2010:79).

Basic infrastructure in low-income neighbourhoods, such as Philippi and Khayelitsha, is often lacking (Evans, 2004). “...sites serving the most deprived are of significantly worse quality [inadequate standard] than those serving children at least risk [high living standard]” (HSRC, 2010:83). “...as a result, children living in poverty are likely not to be receiving ECE [Early Childhood Education] of an adequate quality to offset the deprivation they experience at home and in the community” (Martin, 2012:4). At the most basic level, Dupere et al. (2010:229) suggest “institutional composition generally reflects the larger community makeup”. “Predominantly low-income schools are more likely to have leaky roofs, inadequate plumbing and heating, problems with lighting, inadequate ventilation and acoustical deficiencies” (Evans, 2004:85).

This is the very situation that BLA encounters in communities where it assists with refurbished containers. BLA highlights the kind of change that containers make to the environment of learning and care for children; from a leaky shack or hut to a bright, sturdy classroom that is “strong, secure and protects the little learners from the elements, keeping them safe until their parents return from work...” (BLA, 2012:1). In order for its usage to be enhanced, Alter (2012) elaborates on the features required for the container facility to effectively protect children from extreme weather conditions such as a large roof to shelter the container from direct sunlight and cross ventilation through windows fitted in the containers. For Holloway (2012), a horizontal solar shade, in addition to an “expansive second roof above the container” prevents solar radiation directly affecting the classroom. He also recommends insulating the container facility. In the following sections these changes are described and discussed in relation to the environment debate and children’s propensity to play.

2.5.1 The environment debate

Intrinsic to most of the discussions on ECD is the primacy of the environment in which children’s development takes place. The environment is an indication as well as a standard measure for quality of ECD services a site offers, what the Unicef report refers to as “The state and condition of infrastructure [being] a proxy variable for the quality of ECD facility”

(Unicef, 2010:58). A common measure known as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) “gauges a variety of structural and physical aspects of centres, such as the quality of facilities, availability of developmentally appropriate learning and play materials, the arrangement of child-centred activities, and the nature of child–caregiver interaction” (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1997 as cited by Loeb et al., 2004:5).

The refurbished container classrooms are taken to ECD sites to transform the deprived conditions of “leaky roof and crumbling walls” found at most home-based and community-based sites into sturdy, shiny and secure classrooms (BLA, 2012). The underlying issues considered within this debate, which in essence is the response given by BLA, are around children’s propensity to play, the stimulating function of the environment and the deficit perspective of children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds, who are the focus of this study. Evans (2004:84) further describes the environmental conditions and hazards of such sites: “Not only are the immediate home settings of poor children fraught with physical inequities, but the neighbourhoods they live in are frequently characterized by multiple risks”. This is reflected in a Unicef report which states that “Facilities with inadequate or poor infrastructure present a health and safety risk to children attending ECD” (Unicef, 2010:58).

The environment debate builds on the play premise and discusses the environment as a stimulant to cognitive and motor development. In this sense, the environment is considered a “third teacher with both indoor and out-door experiences as important parts of the learning process” (Miller & Pound, 2010:10). This is affirmed by cognitive psychology theories such as Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory which holds that “cognitive development is the result of an interaction between the individual and the environment” (Oates, 1994:31). According to Miller & Pound (2010:10), the environment should be visually appealing and stimulating, “with close attention paid to spaces, materials, colours, light, microclimate and furnishings”. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) study found that “children scored higher on school readiness and language comprehension at 36 months of age when they attended centres meeting several quality benchmarks” (Fuller et al, 2004:508). To subject children to inadequate environmental conditions is to further stunt and limit their potential. The intervention from BLA is thus both timeous and crucial in terms of improving the space of learning for children in poor communities.

2.5.2 Children's propensity to play

The naturalness of play in children is widely alluded to as a “natural occupation of healthy children” (Unicef, 2007:13, citing Ramugondo, 2004), “the innate desire” of children (Unicef, 2007) and as a “basic human drive” (Bartlett, 1999:68). Bartlett (1999), writing specifically about children in poor urban settlements, sees play as coming in various forms but being basically a way in which the child engages with the world “through exploration, manipulation, physical exuberance, experimentation and pretence, either alone or with others” (Bartlett, 1999:68). Play is important because of its potential to stimulate children to move their bodies, “providing practice in coordinating movement and processing the sensory input ... children learn gross motor skills, fine motor skills, eye–hand coordination, visual perceptual skills and other skills” (Unicef, 2007:13). Bartlett (1999:68) further contends that data from the fields of neuro-psychology and psycho-pharmacology indicate that brain development and changes in social behaviours and capacity for learning are enhanced by play: “Enormous potential for learning is activated by the child’s playful interaction with the world which, in turn, is encouraged by diverse and stimulating environments”.

Thus, “many of the environmental hazards that children face become ‘hazards’ in large part because of their drive for play” (Bartlett, 1999:68). In this context children growing up in overcrowded shacks may be extremely limited in terms of where they can play, and the neighbourhoods in which poor children live are also more physically hazardous (Sherry & Draper, 2012:13; Evans, 2004:85). This is confirmed by a study whose findings indicated that “residing in a low-income neighbourhood was associated with higher rates of child injury, likely due in part to unsafe play areas within the home” (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000:326 citing Durkin et al., 1994). Based on such findings, apart from other factors influencing the quality of ECD, the environment in which ECD services are offered has to be safe and should offer the space and opportunity for children to play.

2.6 An overview of Community-Based and Home-Based ECD Sites

2.6.1 ECD provisioning in South Africa

The ECD sector in South Africa is made up of three types of services, “those that are attached to schools, those that are based in communities and those that offer their services from private homes” (Williams & Samuels, 2001:163). These sites are also referred to as centre-based and non-centre based, the later encompassing community and home-based sites (Orgill, 2010). The literature indicates that there are more children catered for in community-based sites

compared to centre-based and home-based sites: “more than half of children (57%) were enrolled in community-based sites, 24% in home-based sites and 19% in school-based sites” (The Presidency, 2009:74). This reaffirms an earlier finding that about half of the identifiable ECD sites are community-based (Williams & Samuels, 2001).

The Presidency (2009) further distinguishes ECD sites as registered sites at the Department of Social Development (DSD) and Department of Education (DoE) on one hand, community-based sites and home-based sites on the other. In short, there are sites which are formally recognised and those that are not, with the latter representing the majority of community and home-based sites. The registration status has implications on access to government funding which is channelled to ECD sites through Grade R in public schools and subsidies by the DSD to registered community-based facilities. Harrison (2012), in his paper on the state of provision of ECD services in South Africa, argues that the current system of provision ignores the majority of young children who are outside the formal system. It only provides for children who are in registered ECD facilities.

Although the UNICEF report (2007) indicates that government investment in ECD programmes has increased rapidly, the question remains as to whether this funding can be accessed by those who need it most; that is the ECD sites in vulnerable communities. According to Orgill (2010), emphasis should be placed on the need for steady funding of community and home-based sites because these sites are the primary providers of ECD services for the majority of vulnerable children.

2.6.2 Describing Community-based and Home-based ECD sites

Motala (2010:6), citing Biersteker (2007) describes community and home-based ECD programmes as having multiple “location-based integrated ECD strategies, flexible to the needs of their target population”. In contrast to the formal registered ECD centres which are characterised by relatively high unit costs per child, and benefit better-off children, community-based ECD services are poor and reach vulnerable children who are not able to access centre-based services (Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008; Orgill, 2010; Biersteker & Dawes, 2008). Most of the community and home-based services are delivered on a cost recovery basis by private individuals or non-profit initiatives by communities with the support of not-for-profit organisations [NPOs] (Penn, 2011; Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008).

In terms of facilities, BLA has found that there is a great shortage of decent preschool facilities in the country, many of the existing facilities having inadequate classrooms, while others “are no more than a single leaky shack” (BLA, 2012:1). Sherry & Draper (2012:4), using data from the 2001 Nationwide Audit of ECD, observe that infrastructure supporting ECD sites is variable in terms of access to electricity, piped water and flush toilets. A more recent study by Unicef revealed that while public schools were better off in terms of infrastructure:

Only about half of schools and registered facilities and slightly fewer unregistered facilities reported having piped water inside the building. Around 50%–60% of facilities had flush toilets. Pit latrines were found at 41% of public schools, 35% at registered and 28% at unregistered community facilities. Some unregistered facilities had no toilet facilities at all ... Many public schools did not have separate toilet facilities for younger children (Unicef, 2012:vi).

2.6.3 Challenges of running Educare centres

The literature reviewed comprehensively covers the challenges faced by ECD service providers. Like other aspects addressed in this chapter, these challenges are not specific to Educare centres housed in container classrooms but pertain to ECD in general. This research will provide information on the specific challenges encountered by those who use the refurbished containers. Challenges that emerge from the reviewed literature in the area of ECD providers in poor communities are related to resources (both financial and material), training needs, and lack of information on available services.

Sherry & Draper (2012:7), citing Motala (2009), highlight the problems that ECD centres encounter in terms of funding: “Finance continues to be a contentious issue in ECD provision, with DoSD [Department of Social Development] subsidisation reaching only 10% of poor children and covering only part of daily provision costs (not salaries), with a substantial portion intended for nutrition”. This makes it difficult for managers to pay ECD practitioners a steady stipend because the sites are dependent on donors and fees (Ebrahim, Killian & Rule, 2011). This is problematic because funding dependent on donors cannot be assured, while the issue of fees “means that the poorest families continue to be unable to enrol their children” (Sherry & Draper, 2012:7). Furthermore, infrastructural facilities that site managers/owners are able to provide are hard hit by funding constraints. This problem is clearly articulated in the Unicef report of 2010:

At community-based facilities, the Department of Social Development does not regularly provide any funding for infrastructure investment and one may assume that the facilities have to make use of infrastructure developed from the site owners’ own resources or through community resources (e.g. a church). The risk therefore exists that the infrastructure made available to children

attending community-based facilities might be poorer when compared to school-based ECD, although the DSD does require an inspection from the Department of Health before approving a facility (Unicef, 2010:58).

Inequality thus becomes entrenched. According to the Pan report:

ECD programmes and facilities for children aged 0-4 years are almost entirely initiated by private organisations or individuals who bear the full cost of establishing the programme ... [making] provisioning of ECD ... depend[ent] on existing capital within a community (Martin, 2012:4).

The report further indicates that the prevailing situation “prejudices poor communities [as] at present there is no obligation on the State to establish facilities in poor and under-resourced communities” (Martin, 2012:4). As such, the state through its own policies contributes towards the social exclusion of its future generation.

Other challenges that emerged from the literature included the unevenness in the training and qualifications of these ECD practitioners. Some had skills but not sufficient knowledge of early childhood practice, making “the demands on [them] being multi-skilled” problematic (Ebrahim, Killian & Rule, 2011:394). Fragmentation and lack of coordination of ECD services were also noted:

To make things even more difficult, those operating early childhood programmes may not be aware of the ECD programmes offered by other sectors... [therefore] it is not uncommon for parallel programmes to be developed in one community, each addressing a particular need of the child without reference to other needs that may or may not be met (Evans, 1997:5).

2.6.4 Community and Home-based sites on the periphery of the formal system

Social exclusion can clearly be seen in the home and community-based ECD sites that remain outside the formal system. Although it has been consistently shown that these sites cater for far more children than the formal sites, particularly those children from vulnerable communities, the services in community and home-based sites remain unrecorded: “...this information system does not cover education forms out of [not part of] the formal system; thus little is known, for example, of ECD programmes run by non-registered entities, which in fact may play more critical roles in providing early childhood development services to young children” (The Presidency, 2009:133). It is, therefore, not possible to obtain estimates of the number of children being reached through non-centre based ECD programmes from official statistics. As a result, the real picture of ECD provisioning in the country remains obscure.

Furthermore, children attending unregistered ECD facilities do not benefit from the resources available to their peers in registered institutions because “state funding currently is limited to centre-based ECD services ... for which norms and standards, implementation mechanisms and regulatory frameworks have been established” (Motala, 2010:9). As Harrison (2012) put it, public money follows the facility rather than the educational needs of young children. This fact is further laid bare by Richter (2012:22) who indicates that, despite children 3-5 years old from poor families being “eligible for subsidised attendance at early learning and care centres, [they can only get access] if they are fortunate enough to live in an area that is served by a registered, subsidised centre run by a not-for-profit organisation ... [and] if their parents can afford to pay fees”.

Despite the fact that the NIP-ECD recognises a variety of ECD services (Motala, 2010), current legislation in South Africa is prejudiced against the non-centre based services. Just as there is currently no government support for the establishment of ECD services in underserved areas, there are no policies to ensure that children from families who cannot afford fees can access services, either in ECD centres or in home- and community-based programmes (Richter, 2012). Orgill (2010) notes that the Children’s Amendment Bill 19B of 2006, and the Guidelines to ECD Services, privilege the ECD centre model and do not reflect other types of services. In the meantime, communities and organisations like BLA continue to strive to uplift the standards of ECD centres in poor communities and increase their chances of being registered and having access to funding. At the same time, legislation too needs to be revisited and policies vigorously implemented to ensure the rights of all children to education.

2.7 Summary of the chapter

The review of literature in this chapter includes an overview of government legislation, theoretical frameworks and a general discussion on the nature of ECD provisioning in home and community-based sites. It reveals very little difference in the apartheid and post-apartheid ECD provisioning, availability and accessibility. Programmes which “developed in response to the lack of formal ECD services and are serving locations poor in infrastructure and resources” (Unicef, 2007:19) cannot be formalised on account of the very poor infrastructure and resources. A latent expectation continues to exist for these same communities, with the help of NPOs like BLA, to improve the infrastructural standards before they can get registered by the DSD. The following chapter presents the methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological considerations relevant to this study. The research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, data verification, ethical considerations, and limitations are logically presented.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a “strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Durrheim, 2006:34). It is a plan to guide the research process. The current study, which explored beneficiary perceptions and views about the use of refurbished containers for classrooms at educate centres in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape, utilised a qualitative research design and approach. This design was used primarily because the study aimed to elicit in-depth beneficiary perspectives, or what Babbie & Mouton (2001:270) refer to as “insider perspective”, with the purpose of understanding how the container classrooms have affected the lives of those in communities in which the containers are used. This kind of design is crucial to exploring the meanings attached to situations/events; in this case, perceptions of beneficiaries about the value of the refurbished containers. The design also allows for some flexibility in gathering data from various stakeholders. This is what Bryman (2008:385) describes as the “goal of seeking to probe beneath surface appearances” resulting in the opening up of unique and salient perspectives that would not have been anticipated by the research questions. Such a qualitative, exploratory design is a good starting point for further evaluative studies.

3.2 Sampling Approach

The research employed purposive, non-probability sampling. A purposive or purposeful sampling refers to selecting sample respondents based on specific reasons associated with answering the questions of a research study: selecting a small number of cases that will yield the most information about a particular phenomenon (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The sampling process therefore involved the researcher’s discretion and/or determination of choice and was not simply a matter of chance (Denscombe, 2010). As such, a sample was purposively drawn from a list of centres using BLA containers and ultimately, individual participants involved in ECD work at the centres as well as the parents were identified. The particular purposive

sampling technique was chosen for this study because the research questions could only be answered by a sample of participants who have had experience of container classrooms in community educare centres. Furthermore, considering that qualitative studies target small numbers of cases, it is important that these are carefully and deliberately selected in order for the researcher to be able to acquire relevant and in-depth information – what Denscombe (2010) refers to as hand-picked for the research on the basis of relevance and knowledge. However, the limitation of such a sampling approach is that it does not allow for generalisability of findings.

3.2.1 Sampling Strategy

The researcher targeted three educare centres using container classrooms located in Philippi Township in Cape Town. Using the township as a case study, this research was aimed at creating an opportunity for understanding the community's experience and perceptions of the use of the container facilities in the places in which they are located. However, this plan changed during the stage of gaining entry. The database obtained from BLA had some telephone numbers that were no longer in use, while some former ECD centres were no longer in operation. Principals at two centres were contacted and they agreed to participate, although one withdrew indicating that she was too busy because she held a number of leadership positions and could not be available for interviews or to organise key informants for the research. Thus, in the end, only one centre from Philippi participated in the research.

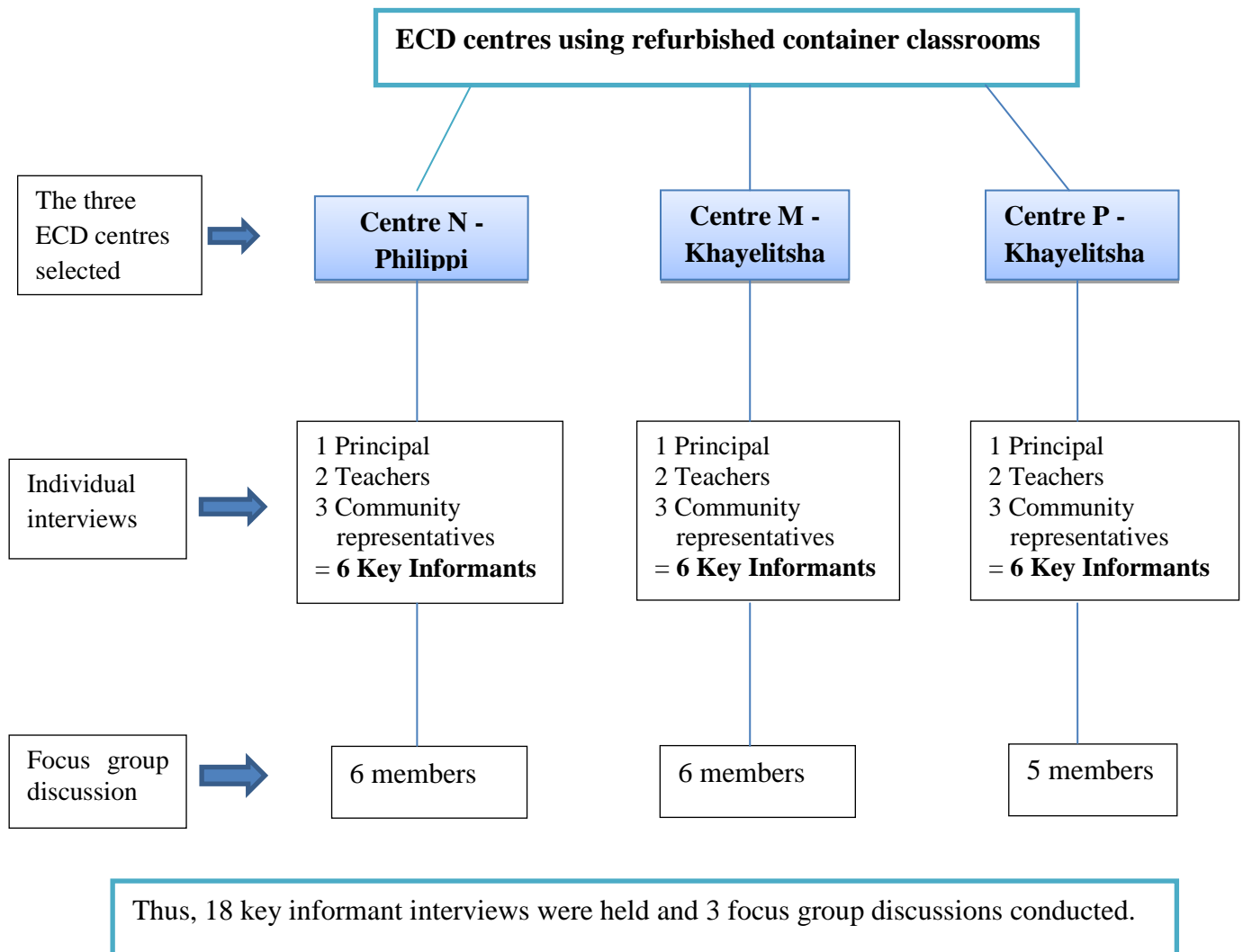
In consultation with the University supervisor, a decision was reached to select another township that was on the BLA database and from which the remaining two centres could be selected. Khayelitsha was selected on the basis that it has the largest number of educare centres that have received refurbished containers. Principals at four centres were contacted and they agreed to the possibility of participating in the research. By the time of conducting interviews, one had silently withdrawn because she did not pick up any calls. The second centre was not able to organise parents and community leaders, indicating that the majority of them could not make themselves available because they were working. Interviews were thus conducted at the remaining two centres.

3.2.2 Total number of respondents

At each of the three educare centres three people were interviewed – in each case, the principal and two teachers. Three other key informants, who were representative of community committees, were interviewed. None of the centres brought in persons from non-

profit organisations working with the community or the Church. In addition, one focus group discussion per centre was held, comprising up to six parents per centre.

3.2.3 Diagram of sample respondents



3.3 Data Collection

Data was gathered by the researcher through face-to-face in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. A research interview is conducted so as to exchange information between the researcher (interviewer) and the respondent (interviewee) (Greeff, 2011). The role of the interviewer was to establish a general focus for the conversation and to pursue specific issues raised by the respondent (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 289). The interviews offered an opportunity to clarify and obtain more information than would have been possible in mailed questionnaires. A semi structured interview schedule was designed (see appendix 1). It served

as a guide and assisted the researcher in ensuring that all the broad research areas were addressed during the interviews. The researcher developed the questions based on the research objectives. The questions were piloted in one centre that was not part of the sample and reframed in consultation with the supervisor.

Focus group discussions were held at each centre with groups of parents. A focus group is a form of interview within a group setting. In a focus group discussion it is possible for more information to emerge than in a one-to-one interview, largely due to the different views that come with group dynamics which “can be a catalytic factor in bringing information to the fore” (Greeff, 2011:341). Thus the information gained was more than the sum total of individual participants as each one provided insights prompted by what other participants were saying. The discussion was also guided by an interview schedule, slightly adapted for participants not directly involved in the day-to-day running of the centres (see appendix 2).

With the participants’ consent, the proceedings of the interviews were recorded using a digital recording device for purposes of maintaining accuracy and to avoid missing out on important information. It also allowed the researcher to concentrate on the proceedings of the interview (Greeff, 2011). The interviewer occasionally took notes of the non-verbal aspects of the interview, such as body gestures and un-elaborated issues, for purposes of further probing. This was, however, kept to a minimum to avoid inhibiting the participant(s) with the interviewer’s concentration on writing. The digitally recorded data were saved on the computer in well-labelled folders after every interview.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is “the activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorising data” (Schwandt, 2007:6 as cited by De Vos et al., 2011:397). The research used an adapted version of the Tesch model of qualitative analysis, which involved transcribing all the interviews and analysing each transcript (Tesch, 1990 cited in De Vos, et al., 1998). Data was organised through the process of establishing themes and categories. Interpretation involved “making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons...” (Patton, 2002:480). In this process, the researcher added analytical commentary in order to deepen the level of understanding. These ‘meanings’ were then written up in the report as the findings of the study. The step-by-step description adapted from the Tesch’s model is outlined in the following section.

3.4.1 The Process of Data Analysis

1. The researcher carefully read through all transcripts to get a general idea of the collected data and jotted down thoughts that immediately came to mind.
2. The researcher selected one interview and read it for meaning - asking herself “what is this about?” and thinking about the underlying meanings of the information given. The thoughts and ideas that came up in the course of this reading were written in the margin. The same process was used for all interviews.
3. The researcher made a list of all the topics that emerged in step 2 and then clustered information into major and unique topics.
4. The researcher returned to the data using the list of topics. The topics were abbreviated as codes and the codes written next to the appropriate segments of the text.
5. The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the topics and turned them into categories. The total list of categories was reduced by grouping together categories that related to each other.
6. The researcher made a final decision on the labelling for each category and went through the coding process again.
7. A framework table for discussing the findings from all the interviews was constructed.
8. The second framework table constructed presented the themes and categories that emerged from the focus groups.
9. The researcher combined both framework tables into one integrated framework (see table 3) that encapsulated the themes and categories for both the individual interviews and the focus groups.
10. The findings were logically written up according to this framework.
11. The findings were compared and contrasted with other studies (in the literature review) and insights from the theoretical models further enhanced the analysis.

3.5 Data verification

The qualitative research design faces criticism of being subjective and not able to ensure trustworthiness of data. However Shenton (2004) emphasises that although critics hold this view, frameworks for ensuring rigour have been in existence for many years. In this research, data verification was done using the four constructs of Lincoln and Guba (1999) as cited by Schurink et al (2011): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility is also referred to as authenticity. It is the demonstration that the inquiry accurately identified and described the subject (Schurink et al, 2011) and that the study evaluated what was intended (Shenton, 2004). This research was conducted within the parameters set by the research design, and during data collection, utilised the interview schedules which were developed based on the research questions and worked within the objectives set at the start of the research.

3.5.2 Transferability or generalisability

This demonstrates applicability of one set of findings to another context (Schurink et al, 2011). The concept gives a researcher the responsibility to ensure sufficient contextual information is given so that any reader can decide if the described situation is similar to the one they would like to transfer the findings to (Shenton, 2004). This research however, did not emphasise the issue of transferability but endeavoured to gain an understanding of beneficiary perceptions about the use of container classrooms for ECD.

3.5.3 Dependability

This construct holds that if the research conducted “were to be repeated with the same or similar respondents... in the same [or a similar context], its findings would be similar” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 278). Shenton (2004:71) argues that “in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work...” This report outlined the methodology in detail, and therefore replication with similar results should be possible.

3.5.4 Confirmability

This deals with assessing objectivity of the findings in terms of whether evidence validates the findings and interpretations (Schurink et al, 2011). In this study, it involved checking “the degree to which the findings [were] the product of ... inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). This explains why the researcher has used direct quotes from participants as empirical evidence to ensure that the views of the participants are not overtaken by those of the researcher. During the interviews, the researcher periodically summarised to the participants what she had understood so that the participant could confirm the correctness or otherwise of the position held by the researcher. Furthermore, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to avoid any misrepresentation of facts.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Babbie & Mouton (2001:520) define ethics in terms of what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry. They further emphasise that researchers ought to be sensitised to the “ethical component in research so that [they] look out for it” in all research undertakings right from the planning stage. At the onset of this study, the researcher acknowledged the importance of safeguarding the interests of each research participant through observing the following ethical tenets:

3.6.1 Voluntary, informed consent

Although it was desirable and almost expected that everyone who has benefitted from the provision of refurbished containers from BLA would participate in the research, no one was coerced into the research: this was evidenced from some withdrawals. Participants were requested to voluntarily participate in the study. Sufficient information about the research was provided to enable participants to give their voluntary informed consent, which is defined as “a reasoned judgement about whether or not they want to participate” (Denscombe, 2010:332). Each participant signed a consent form (appendix 4) “as a way of formally recording the agreement to participate and confirming that the participant had been informed about the nature of the research” (Denscombe, 2010:332). During data collection, permission was sought from the participants to record the interviews. The participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage if they felt the need to do so.

3.6.2 Avoidance of deception

A social science researcher is expected to avoid deception in dealings with participants and is expected to be explicit about the purpose and reason for the research (Denscombe, 2010). The researcher endeavoured to ensure the transparency of the research, that there was no deception at any stage of the research, by constantly sharing the processes of the research with the participants and explaining clearly what was expected of them. She also took care not to raise expectations about participating in the research.

3.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

This research upheld the principles of confidentiality and anonymity by not divulging any identifiable information about the participants. All findings are reported ensuring the anonymity of all participants who were encouraged to use pseudonyms for all recorded

interviews. The data would be kept in a safe place and destroyed after five years. Only the supervisor, the external examiner and BLA would have access to this report.

3.6.4 Action and competence of the researcher

A researcher is ethically obliged to ensure that she/he is competent, honest and adequately skilled to undertake the study (William, 2006 as cited by Strydom, 2011). Prior to conducting this study, this researcher had done a research course and undertaken a research project at Honours level. She was also supported by a university supervisor competent in the area of research who guided the researcher throughout the course of the research undertaking. Furthermore, in accordance with academic requirements, all works consulted and assistance received during the research have been duly acknowledged.

3.6.5 Publication of findings

The findings of this study will be made available in the form of this research report. The report is submitted to the University of Cape Town and a copy to BLA. Care was taken that the investigation was conducted ethically, that the report was accurate with careful referencing of other authors and no data was manipulated to confirm certain preconceived points of view. As far as is possible in a qualitative study, the report was compiled with maximum objectivity and in language that is unambiguous (Strydom, 2011).

3.7 Limitations

Marshall & Rossman (2006:42) state that “limitations derive from the conceptual framework and the study design ... [as well as from] framing the study in specific research and scholarly traditions”. One limitation of this study is that the sample was small and localised to two townships. The research findings are therefore not generalisable to other communities where BLA has assisted in providing ECD infrastructure through refurbished containers. However, generalisation was not the primary purpose for conducting this research. The purpose was to garner perceptions on the contribution that the use of refurbished containers has made to the quality of care and education of young children in community educare centres. It also sought to understand how the quality of life of entire communities has been affected by the establishment and use of these containers. A limitation was noted at the data collection stage where the researcher depended on the Principals of the educare centres to organise the other participants. The data collection methods proved to be time-consuming and interviewing skills were needed to conduct interviews. Furthermore, getting a focus group together was not

easy and demands were made on the 'moderator' to keep the group process going. Transcribing the data also took much time and the recordings were not always clear.

The researcher was aware of, and continuously checked for, possible biases that could interfere with the process. The researcher also tried to ensure that she was at all times aware of her own possible biases and subjective opinions about the container project and that these did not interfere with the interview and data analysis processes. The novice researcher gained sufficient support from her supervisor throughout the research process.

3.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented a detailed description of the processes and procedures that the researcher engaged in with regard to the research methodology. The following chapter will present and discuss the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4. Introduction

This chapter presents data obtained from the in-depth interviews with participants involved in the ECD centres and the focus group discussions with parents of the children at the centres. Firstly, the profile of research respondents is presented in two tables (Table 1: profile of key informants and Table 2: profile of the focus group members). An integrated framework for discussion and analysis of findings (Table 3) provides a combined set of themes and categories for the two sets of findings. The findings are then presented and discussed systematically according to the logical layout of the framework.

4.1 Profile of the research participants

4.1.1 Profile of key informants (Principals, teachers and community leaders)

Key informants in this research included principals and teachers from the participating ECD centres as well as community leaders from the areas in which the centres are located. A detailed presentation of their profiles is given in table 1.

Table 1 Profile of the key informants (Principals [P], teachers [T] and community leaders [CL])

| Centre | Key Informant (KI) | Role | Sex | Marital status | Home language | Highest education level | Duration of stay in the community | known the ECD centre for how long | Knew ECD in earlier shack |
|---------------|--------------------|------|-----|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| N-Philippi | KI-1 | CL | M | Married | Xhosa | Standard 8 | 33 (years) | 9 (years) | Yes |
| | KI-2 | CL | F | Married | Xhosa | | 22 | 17 | Yes |
| | KI-3 | CL | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 22 | 17 | Yes |
| | KI-4 | T | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 6 | 6 | No |
| | KI-5 | T | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 12 + Tertiary edu | 34 | 5 | No |
| | KI-6 | P | F | Single | Xhosa | Standard 6 | 22 | 18 | Yes |
| M-Khayelitsha | KI-7 | T | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 18 | 16 | Yes |
| | KI-8 | CL | M | With partner | Xhosa | Grade 12 | 7 | 5 | No |
| | KI-9 | CL | F | With partner | Xhosa | Grade 10 | 7 | 5 | No |
| | KI-10 | CL | M | Widower | Xhosa | Grade 12 | 13 | 9 | Yes |
| | KI-11 | P | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 21 | 16 | Yes |
| | KI-12 | T | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 10 | 20 | 6 | Yes |
| P-Khayelitsha | KI-13 | CL | F | Widow | Xhosa | Grade 9 | 31 | 20 | Yes |
| | KI-14 | CL | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 8 | 29 | 13 | Yes |
| | KI-15 | T | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 12 | 28 | 9 | No |
| | KI-16 | T | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 10 | 12 | Yes |
| | KI-17 | P | F | Widow | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 20 | 20 | Yes |
| | KI-18 | CL | F | Widow | Xhosa | Standard 6 | 26 | 16 | Yes |

All key informants resided within the same communities as the specific educare centre, had known the centre for periods ranging from 5 to 20 years, and were in a position to give informed perceptions about the use of container classrooms at the educare centres.

4.1.2 Profile of Focus Groups members

Data for this research was also collected through focus group discussions. These groups were comprised of parents of children who were enrolled at the educare centres that participated in the research. The groups were classified as FG-N, FG-M and FG-P.

Table 2 Profile of the focus group members (Parents of children enrolled at the ECD centres)

| Centre | Focus Group (FG) Members | Sex | Marital status | Home language | Highest education attained | Duration of stay in the community | Known the ECD centre for how long | Knew ECD in earlier shack |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| N-Philippi | FG-N1 | M | Married | Xhosa | Grade 9 | 22 (years) | 17 (years) | Yes |
| | FG-N2 | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 9 | 22 | 17 | Yes |
| | FG-N3 | F | Divorced | Xhosa | Grade 12 | 10 | | Yes |
| | FG-N4 | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 11 | 22 | 17 | Yes |
| | FG-N5 | M | Married | Xhosa | Standard 8 | 33 | 16 | Yes |
| | FG-N6 | M | Married | Xhosa | Grade 10 | 22 | 17 | Yes |
| M - Khayelitsha | FG-M1 | M | Married | Xhosa | Grade 7 | 20 | 5 | No |
| | FG-M2 | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 5 | 21 | 6 | Yes |
| | FG-M3 | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 10 | 21 | 9 | Yes |
| | FG-M4 | F | Single | Xhosa | | 21 | | Yes |
| | FG-M5 | F | Widow | Xhosa | Grade 7 | 21 | 6 | Yes |
| | FG-M6 | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 5 | 18 | 16 | Yes |
| P - Khayelitsha | FG-P1 | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 12 | 12 | 4 | No |
| | FG-P2 | F | Single | Xhosa | | 20 | 20 | Yes |
| | FG-P3 | F | Single | Xhosa | Grade 10 | 20 | 17 | Yes |
| | FG-P4 | F | Single | Sotho | Grade 8 | 20 | 20 | Yes |
| | FG-P5 | F | Married | Xhosa | Grade 8 | 12 | 12 | Yes |

FG-N consisted of 6 parents (2 male and 4 female) who had all known the centre before the setting up of the container infrastructure. The periods of time they had lived in the community ranged from 10 – 33 years.

FG-M had six parents participating in the discussion; 1 male and 5 females. They were all residents of the community in which the educare centre was located, having lived there for periods ranging between 18 and 21 years. Five knew the centre before the coming of the containers, while one knew it in its current state with container classrooms.

Lastly, focus group FG-P was made up of five mothers, all from the community in which the educare centre was located. They had lived in the community for periods between 12 and 20 years. All except one of these mothers had known the educare centre even before BLA placed container classrooms there.

Having presented the profiles of the participants, the following section presents the framework for discussion and analysis of findings.

4.2 Framework for discussion and analysis of findings

This section presents the framework used to present and analyse data. It contains four themes (linked to the research objectives) and fourteen categories which emanated from the findings. The framework is detailed in table 3 below.

Table 3 Integrated Framework for the discussion of findings for the focus groups and key informants

| THEMES | CATEGORIES |
|--|---|
| The use of containers as classrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities undertaken in the container classrooms • Suitability of the container classrooms • Contribution of the container classrooms to the development of early learning |
| The difference that container classrooms have made to the communities in which they are situated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situation prior to the placement of the container facility • Availability of safe and healthy child care facilities • Resource for community activities |
| Challenges experienced by those using container classrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of the container classrooms • Inflexibility to modifications • Intermittent funding |
| Future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of bigger container classrooms • Providing other facilities required at an educare centre • Creating a stimulating environment around the container structures • Modifying the structures • Stakeholder participation in the management of the facilities |

4.3 Presentation and discussion of findings

The following sections will present a general overview of the container facilities and discuss the findings according to the framework in table 3.

4.3.1 General overview of the container facilities targeted for this study

The study set out to explore beneficiary perceptions about the use of container classrooms at ECD centres. It must, however, be noted that the research established that container facilities at educare centres were not limited to container classrooms; they included other vital facilities, such as a kitchen, an office and ablution block. Of the three centres that were part of this research, one centre had 2, 12x2.5m containers joined to make one big classroom facility. The second had 2, 12x2.5m container classrooms erected in an 'L' shape as two separate rooms, while the third centre had container facilities making up the core of the centre's infrastructure. It had a 12x2.5m fully furnished container kitchen, a 6m ablution block with flush toilets, hand basins and running water as well as a 6m classroom – recently changed into the Principal's office and storage space due to increased numbers of children who could no longer fit into the classroom. A big shack structure still stood in the middle of the third centre and was used as a classroom. Only one centre has two 'brick and mortar' classrooms in addition to the container facilities. This means that the centres largely depend on the use of the container classrooms provided by BLA for their functioning. However, although all these structures contributed to enhancing the operations of the ECD centres, the focus of this study remains the usage of container classrooms. The discussion will therefore present perceptions of the key informants and focus groups regarding the use of containers as classrooms.

4.3.2 The uses of the container classrooms

The uses are discussed under three sub-headings: activities undertaken in the container classrooms, suitability of the facilities for childcare and the contribution to early learning.

a) Activities undertaken in the container classrooms

The research established that the container classrooms at the three centres were used primarily for the education and care of the children enrolled at the centres. Furthermore, it clearly emerged that, in addition to the primary usage of the facilities for ECD, the communities which these centres operate from benefit immensely because they use them for community related activities. As noted by Penn (2004), educare centres are spaces where childcare for working mothers is provided, children are prepared for school and develop

socialisation skills with peers, and where broader community development activities are hosted and facilitated. This section discusses these uses under three major topics: childcare, preparation for formal schooling, and community services.

❖ **Childcare**

The study established that the targeted educare centres were regarded as safe places where children could be cared for while their parents were either working or engaged at home. As such, the use of container classrooms at the ECD centres was mainly for the care of children enrolled at the centres. Aspects of care included the use of the facilities as sleeping, feeding and play spaces for the babies and toddlers for whom not much is done in terms of formal teaching. One participant commented on the safety provided for the children in the community, and the resultant peace of mind for the parents:

This container is used to look after children, to keep the children. When their fathers and mothers go to work, the children are brought here to stay until the parents come back. The parents don't worry what is happening at home because they know they are in safe hands (KI-4, Teacher).

A community leader also commented on the container as a safe space for the children of the community, freeing the parents to find work:

These containers for us are used for protecting the children from child abuse because if we leave them just walking around the community streets, they can be abused. Some of the mothers want to go out and look for jobs and when they think about the safety of children they don't. But since we got this container, everyone feels safe (KI-9).

Children at the centres were also catered for in terms of nutritious food which would not be the case if they were left at home with other siblings who may be too young to know about appropriate nutrition, or left in a family that may not be able to afford the required quantities and quality of food. A participant emphasised this point:

Yoh sissie! How many children in their families get this kind of food always? This food is rich, it is also given to the inspectors when they come here and they have to confirm we can prepare it for the children or not...when they open the food packs that they bring from home some of the mothers do not pay attention to what is good for children they just give it because the child wants those food (KI-18, Community leader).

Ebrahim, Killian & Rule (2011:388), writing about ECD centres in South Africa, refer to these centres as “hubs of care offering a package of services to households and communities”. Furthermore, the recognition of community ECD centres as places of care is highlighted in the NIP-ECD, with particular emphasis placed on the “poor and vulnerable children from birth to four” (RSA, 2005:13). Among the chief arguments presented in favour of the integrated approach for ECD is the provision of nutrition, a service provided in all

three centres that were part of the study. Thus these ECD centres are the kind of intervention advocated for by Sherry & Draper (2012) that overcomes the negative effects of deprivation and the impacts of poverty on child development.

❖ Preparation of children for formal schooling

All participants in this research indicated that the container classrooms had provided the much needed space for the preparation of children for the formal education system. For the children older than three years, the space was utilised as teaching space for academic preparation, toilet training and body coordination:

We use for teaching children mos. We improve their knowledge because the crèche is a foundation... (KI-4, Teacher).

Benefits for the child? Firstly it is education (KI-15, Teacher).

Five participants highlighted the difficulties that children who have had no opportunity to attend an early learning facility have when they enter the education system. It appears that the desire to overcome these difficulties was a major reason for establishing and running these centres, even under difficult and substandard conditions. If children are to cope with the demands of the school system and eventually be able to break out of a poverty situation, they need a solid foundation, as indicated by two of the Principals:

I'm helping so that the children can't run around in the streets also so that children can get an education ... If you see how children were struggling to learn to read and write if they have not been to crèche, you would say it is important for every child to have an opportunity to learn when they are still very small. It opens them up, like preparing them for the things in school (KI-17, Principal).

If I didn't take my child to the crèche and then he or she go to school and did not come here he don't know how to read. You know here they start him or her from the start how to read and write if he didn't go to crèche, the teacher in school must start from the start and it's a hard job for the teacher (KI-11, Principal).

Thus these ECD centres have provided children with the head-start they need to enter the schooling system and this early stimulation is a very important aspect of child development. The teachers were very clear and articulate about what kinds of knowledge they impart to the children engaged in early learning at these centres. Asked what they teach children, an enthusiastic teacher responded:

Oh, quite a lot. As an ECD teacher you got to be very active because involving the children is the most important thing for stimulation of the children. You know mos children learn by playing so you got to be creative and plan lessons through play or activity. It keeps me on my toes to do that for each child as each one is different you know mos ... (KI-5, Teacher).

She further elaborated on specific things they teach children such as seasons, days of the week, months, as well as stimulating them into creativity through various creative art activities:

...they do different things, like there, it's a threading game with different colours for their eye and hand coordination...As you can see their desks are in groups. If one group is doing hand and eye coordination the other one will do a concentration game, which is eye coordination only. And the other group will do a building block which is building their muscle, their cross motor skills. The other group will be doing reading; they go to the book corner and choose a book of their choice. So you don't select a book for them. They must know which book they like and they must tell you what they see on the book since most of them cannot read at the age of four...Sometimes they do painting... (KI-5, Teacher).

Another key informant added that they learn the alphabet and counting;

... A.B.C and then they make them learn how to write 1.2.3.4.5 then they write it down (KI-18, Community leader).

The teaching that takes place includes social skills such as learning to communicate with other children and learning to speak additional languages. It also involves behavioural issues as highlighted by the two principals,

In their homes they've got drunken parents and others live near taverns so they learn bad language. We are trying, those who are coming from not so right environment like their parents are drinking or they are near by the tavern, we hear and see that one is not coming in the right place but here we are trying to make the child [understand] that here you can't swear you must talk a right language you can't do things like that. Yeah, we show them what we feel a child needs to know as they grow up (KI-17, Principal).

You see our communities are full of children learning drugs, swearing words that's why it's important to bring children to crèche so that they cannot like be in the street there are lots of wrong things children can learn on the streets ... The benefit is to bring the child to learn good things in school; you keep them at home you have yourself to blame because now things are not good for children you sit at home and you don't know when your child has been recruited into a gang. We are happy to have children here we know something positive comes out (KI-11, Principal).

The findings of this research resonate with contemporary research which sees ECD as a key area of intervention and one which “presents its own window of opportunity ... [likely to offset] the far-reaching effects of disadvantage in the early years of life” (Sherry & Draper, 2012:3 citing Engle et al., 2011.). ECD provision is crucial because it is said to have “unparalleled potential to equalise opportunities and outcomes for children born into adverse circumstances” (Martin, 2012:2). Furthermore, it “lays a foundation for success in the schooling system” (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008:185). This is where recourse to the human security approach plays a role because it advances the urgency of addressing “the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who [seek] security in their daily lives” (UNDP, 1994:22).

The failure to offer timely intervention during children's early years has been linked to "South Africa's poor schooling outcomes and low skills base" (Biersteker, 2012:52). Children raised in poor families have a disadvantage when they enter primary school, and generally adjust poorly if they have not had an early learning exposure and are likely to continue the cycle of poverty (Evans 1997; DoE, 2001). Similarly, Sherry & Draper (2012:2) argue that "Poor children, without intervention, are set on a developmental trajectory that continually widens the gap between them and the rich or middle class, setting them up for a lifetime of disadvantage".

❖ Community services

In addition to the use of the container classrooms for the care and preparation of children for formal education, usage of the facilities at all centres extended to other activities that were not specifically related to educare services for children, but were more community oriented. One participant saw it as a boon for the community:

...everyone is free to come and talk to Principal and use it; it is a proper gift to the community not only to the children (FG-N1).

Another expressed his appreciation of the use of the container for community activities:

...this to us is very much important and we can just say thanks to Breadline Africa because these containers now help us a lot (KI-1, Community leader)

Meetings were among the most prominent additional activities held in these facilities:

Yes, although this is for the preschool not the community, we just ask and use it for meetings (KI-2, Community leader).

...these containers are useful for us, to the community, I am a community leader. Like for instance when it's raining or like now in winter time we come here and ask the teacher if we can come here and get a space to hold our meetings... Like even the youth, the youngsters when they have meetings they also come here it's not just the community leaders (KI-3, Community leader).

Other activities that emerged as taking place in the container classrooms were celebrations, such as children's birthday parties, weddings and graduation ceremonies for the children, church services and afterschool care/youth activities. These are discussed later in connection with the second theme of the framework.

Moreover, even with all the current uses, participants in the research hoped the centres, and particularly the container facilities, could be used for more activities than was currently the

case. One participant expressed this through a comparison with the activities other communities were using the container facilities for:

In this community and in others around here ... people use containers for many other things. They make a crèche, soup kitchen and adult people who don't know how to read how to write you know, so we can make a project like that someone who can volunteer to teach the adults how to write and read in these containers. There so much you can do with the container ... you can take the people who don't work and make sewing so that they can have a thing in their hands and so that they can eat... (KI-18, Community leader)

It emerged that participants envisaged a situation where the containers could be used to offer academic benefits, or 'Adult Education', to the rest of the community, in addition to the education being provided for children. They saw the availability of the container classrooms as an opportunity which could be used to improve literacy levels among adults. Participating in a focus group discussion, a group of parents emphasised that such facilities could be of benefit to them:

We could use the container for the old age like us to learn English because some of us we cannot write or read (FG-P1).

Another parent added that illiteracy put many in the community at a disadvantage:

When we go to office we make that X, like X. So she can teach us and for the whole community. Many people here in the community cannot speak English, maybe I'm there in my house somebody's coming to talk to me I can't talk must looking for a person who must translate for me (FG-P3).

Participants also saw that the facilities could be used for computer lessons and as a place where they and the older children could get assistance to do their homework:

...maybe the teenagers on weekends can do the computer course, if somebody is available to teach that (KI-5, Teacher).

Because that can help our children after school for home work for the other people who are not working mos can help our children like doing homework (FG-P1).

A library was among the other academic uses that participants wished the container space and classrooms to offer. A parent expressed the hope that a library corner would be created in the container classrooms for their children to have access to books:

Our children have no library around here so it would be good to have one corner with books for our children to get used to going to the library and read (FG-P1).

This request was even more strongly expressed by the teacher participants in this research:

What we need so badly now is a children's library, these children are clever and they need to be taught how to use the library at an early age so that they have no problems as they go on with school... I would love to have a library for the children for them to experience at a young age how to use a library... and they know how to access books in the library (KI-5, Teacher).

Other uses were recreation spaces for the youth as well as occupational spaces for the older members of the community:

Okay for instance we have youngsters in this community, we could have them practice arts and culture... you see our youngsters have nothing to do, they just walk all day in the streets and they could come here and do something with their time. Just now even if someone was interested in doing something with them there is no space to meet them so this place could be used when the children are not there (FG-N2).

Yes even old people who are interested in making beads or whatever, they can make use of such a bigger space because we suffer going there [pointing] to Nyanga and it's too far for the old people ... they want to do something small and meet other people of their age. If we could get a time when these old mamas could come here, it would be nice and easier for them (FG-N3).

What also emerged was the idea that the container classrooms could be used to reach out to the poorer members of the communities through projects like a soup kitchen:

I know of a lady who makes soup on Sundays for poor people who can't afford proper meals. I think since it is on Sundays we can ask the principal that we let her use this space (FG-N4).

All of these ideas, requests and expressed needs make reference to the lack of community facilities and resources. The findings of the study support the position held by Motala (2010) that, in addition to catering and caring for children, home and community-based ECD centres frequently offer other social services to the community at large. According to Alter (2012), a container classroom at a rural school in Vissershok serves as a classroom in the morning for Grade R students and a small library in the afternoon for the entire Vissershok Primary School. Additionally, these sites become a focus for community development and contribute to improved child-rearing practices and children's nutritional status (Penn, 2004). And because the communities in which container classrooms are placed are so impoverished, "the schools often also become hubs for a variety of neighbourhood events, similar to a recreational or community centre" (Arnold, 2011).

b) Suitability of the container facilities for child care and education

The majority of participants considered the container classrooms suitable for children, largely on the basis of measuring them in terms of the comparative advantage that the container facilities have over the shack structures that ECD centres previously operated from:

See we had a shack before, and only if you have seen the problems of the shack, then you know that this is much better and it is warm and strong enough so there are no worries that it will fall on the children or that children will get injured (KI-1, Community leader).

It is suitable because before this, she was using shacks ... but now since we got this container we feel safe, our lives are safe, even the principal herself has safety from theft because as it is now she just keep everything in the container and locks it up (KI-3, Community leader).

A frequent reference point for most of the participants in their comparisons between the former shacks and the present containers was the safety enhancement that had been experienced by teachers and children with the erection of the container classrooms; the reduction of the likelihood of accidents, such as fire, as well as the suitability of the fixtures and fittings possible in a container facility, was appreciated:

The children cannot make fire; it's not easy to make fire like a shack. So that worry has been taken from us, so many accidents happen in shacks. But the container has electricity so children don't get to play with fire because they can keep warm by the heater (FG-P1)

Even in cold weathers the wooden floor is okay and there are built-in cupboards that are there for storing things so it is better in that way. We do not have things all over in the room. We can also teach children to pack up when they are done with their toys or books and when they need it again the next day; they know where to get it from (KI-5, Teacher).

The durability of the facility, as well as space and health issues were raised:

...this facility is suitable and it is strong so you don't worry about children getting hurt or something breaking off...that material is very strong (KI-15, Teacher)

...it is suitable, in fact very suitable because it is strong enough and everyone is comfortable to use it. The children are safe; we are also safe when we sit in there (KI-2, Community leader)

A key informant added:

...It also has windows so if it is hot we open them because we have so many children in there and if it raining we can close everything... (KI-15, Teacher)

However, there were some informants, mainly the teachers, who felt the container classrooms were not entirely adequate or appropriate for children because of reasons to do with the difficulty in keeping them warm in winter, and the space not being adequate for the numbers of children at the centres:

No, actually... [A little hesitant], it is not good for children because it is cold, the inside is cold when it rains... it also has no space for a kitchen, we need kitchen in that room and a toilet inside. But the toilet is outside, when it's raining, the children, be wet. Water is too far ... when we change the babies, we need water. You can't change the baby inside and then run outside to wash hands but you also can't take the baby outside just because you need to have water nearby (KI-4, Teacher)

...as for suitability they only need to work on them a little more, we have problem of leakage and how to keep it warm. You see how I put the heater; since it is a moveable one I have to suspend it otherwise I have problems if the children want to go near because they need the heat. But when the heater is up there it takes a long time to heat up the whole room so the children need to be kept active so that they don't feel too cold (KI-5, Teacher).

...more space is needed for dividing areas where kids will be showing their creativity in arts; they need to make block areas, for example when using equipment on educational tour... (KI-11, Principal).

The issue of space was critical for the teachers at centre P which had the smallest container classroom of the participating centres. The limited space in the container classroom forced the centre to revert to the use of the shack as a classroom because it was much easier to extend it and create more space:

Look at its size, okay it's not too small but it can't have too many children if we put in chairs and tables for the kids, so much space is lost. We used to have only one group in here then all the others in the shack. So she [Principal] got the shack which you saw outside extended and we moved all the groups of children into the shack because it got enough space. It is also well divided for the different groups, it also has space for feeding (KI-16, Teacher).

The key informants' general appreciation of the container infrastructure donated by BLA was cardinal. These communities experienced living environment deprivation and were thus grateful for any improvement (Wright & Noble, 2009). Other authors have described this 'living environment deprivation' and the real and potential effect this deprivation has on early childhood development. According to Martin (2012), as a result of this lack of basic infrastructure, "... children living in poverty are likely not to be receiving ECE [Early Childhood Education] of an adequate quality to offset the deprivation they experience at home and in the community" (Martin, 2012:4). At the most basic level, Dupere et al. (2010:229) suggest that "institutional composition generally reflects the larger community makeup". In this context Evans (2004) sees the cyclical relationship between schools and the socio-economic environments in which they are situated: "Predominantly low-income schools are more likely to have leaky roofs, inadequate plumbing and heating, problems with lighting, inadequate ventilation and acoustical deficiencies" (Evans, 2004:85). Furthermore, "residing in a low-income neighbourhood was associated with higher rates of child injury, likely due in part to unsafe play areas ..." (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000:326, citing Durkin et al., 1994). These context factors could be said to underscore the reasons why key informants largely rated the container classrooms 'suitable' for ECD. BLA claims that the containers change the environment of learning and care for children from "a leaky shack or hut to a bright, sturdy classroom [that is] strong, secure and protects the little learners from the elements, keeping them safe until their parents return from work..." (BLA, 2012:1).

c) The containers' contribution to the development of early learning

Key informants in this research outlined a number of ways in which they thought container classrooms had contributed to the development of early learning. Firstly, views from one of the targeted centres indicated that containers offered an opportunity for age-specific early learning activities because the container classroom was big enough to allow for partitioning

to create separate spaces for the different age groups. At centre M, the two container classrooms were actually created as two separate facilities as opposed to joining them, therefore taking the needs of different age groups into consideration:

The teachers are using up spaces according to different children because they are having children starting from 0-6, so they make up different classes in the same container. If you can see from this door, they have 0-6 months, from there, there's children from 6 months to 1 year 2 months and here in front, they are starting from 3 to 4 years and that side they are taking from 5 to 6 years. So they are putting children in different categories (KI-1, Community leader).

A focus group member also described how, since the establishment of the containers, the teachers could use the space to accommodate age-appropriate activities for different groups of children:

Yes because by the time it was a shack it was plus or minus room this small [showing measure by hand] so if the teacher was teaching the kids all of them had to come together but now they can go into different groups and they can do different activities... the other teacher can make them do something that suits each group (FG-N1).

The teacher's perspective emphasised that the idea of the container and its structural features was more appropriate than the shack and had a moderating effect on the noise level:

Like you can teach from the container, you see we are talking but it keeps the noise down. It is different from the shack because the shack you hear everything from outside and those who are outside also hear what you are saying inside. And you know the little ones can scream sometimes and they can disturb maybe the babies or another group that is doing something different but in the container, the noise is kept down very much, we have no problems (KI-7, Teacher).

Container classrooms facilitated the use of stimulating materials. Teachers were able to make use of a space and environment that can accommodate learning aids such as drawings, posters, and other early learning resources:

Like the service now ney! It's good man, like now you can see inside they have got drawings everything. You couldn't put drawings like this in a shack (giggling). It's a crèche now as you can see (KI-3, Community leader).

...in the shack it can't work because when it's hot on the shack the posters is falling off, it gets loose...so the container is good, like here you can even make a notice board and stick things on it (FG-P2).

The containers also make it more possible for explorative play for the children including physical activities. This was described by three key informants as follows:

And the space of the container is helpful for children. The way they dance, they do dancing (FG-M5).

Yes, because by skipping around also, counting the condos [rows in the container] they learn (KI-11, Principal).

I feel great because the children have enough space to play and for doing everything (FG-P1).

The possibility of having more stimulation and teaching taking place are key contributions that container classrooms have made to early learning. In comparison to the care and teaching conditions in the shacks, where the teacher spends more time on watching out for the safety of the children due to the unsafe structures, the containers were significantly more secure. This safety aspect and the solidity of the container infrastructure were highlighted and commented on favourably by all the key informants:

...the teacher can have more time now to concentrate on activities because they don't have to look around for children ... (KI-10, Community leader).

It is helpful because when it was raining in the shack before, the rain used to come through the roof and they got disturbed when teaching, this forced teachers to move kids into a corner... Instead of following a daily routine, so in the container they can follow their daily routine, even if it is raining... (KI-6, Principal).

It helps me in a big way, because if you don't have a good quality facility you will be frustrated about the quality of the facility instead of focusing on teaching the children. Then if the issue of the facility is sorted, then you can focus on more important things and you not only focussing on that, but you also grow in your ideas (KI-5, Teacher).

The contribution of the container classrooms, and the space and infrastructure they provide, for the development of early learning hinges on the primacy of the environment in which children's development takes place. According to Unicef (2010:58), "The state and condition of infrastructure [is] a proxy variable for the quality of ECD facility". This implies that the environment gives an indication of, or a standard measure for, the quality of ECD services a site offers. This is measured by many physical features such as "...the quality of facilities, availability of developmentally appropriate learning and play materials, the arrangement of child-centred activities, and the nature of child-caregiver interaction" (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1997, as cited by Loeb et al., 2004:5). The refurbished container classrooms are taken to ECD sites in order to transform the deprived conditions of "leaky roof and crumbling walls" found at most home-based and community-based sites into sturdy, shiny and secure classrooms (BLA, 2012). An important consideration in this regard is based on the premise of children's propensity to play, which sees the environment as a stimulant to cognitive and motor development. In this sense, the environment is considered a "third teacher with both indoor and out-door experiences an important part of the learning process" (Miller & Pound, 2010:10). Whilst the external environment (the communities) have not changed significantly, life inside these containers 'added value' to the children.

4.3.3 The difference that container classrooms have made to the communities in which they are situated

This section gives an overview of the situation prior to the placement of the containers, the current facilities and their use by the communities.

a) Situation prior to the placement of the container facilities

In order to understand the difference that container classrooms have made to the communities in which they are situated, the research investigated the situation of the centres before BLA donated the container facilities in use at the centres. All three centres had make-shift structures which participants variously referred to as ‘shack’, ‘shelter’, ‘false hokkies’ (hokkies), and ‘ityotyombe’. One participant described one such structure:

...the whole structure was made of iron sheets put together with other materials sometimes cardboards... a shack is not good for children at all... (KI-2, Community leader).

Furthermore, the risk of the roof being blown away was a constant source of anxiety because of the manner in which it was fixed to the rest of the structure:

It had heavy tyres on the top so that when the wind is blowing, the roof does not go up. When the wind is strong, the shack is shaking all the time and making noise. You can't hear each other and you are not sure if it will fall or not... (FG-P1).

It clearly emerged from all participants that shacks were not considered suitable structures, not only for children but for adults as well, and that it was only the poverty levels that made it necessary for people to use them. One participant argued:

...It is not safe, it's very cold, no one likes a shack it's only because people don't have money that they use shacks nothing good about them (KI-10, Community leader).

The key informants indicated that the safety levels in shacks were very low, such that a teacher working with children needed to always be on the lookout to ensure that children were not injured. It was likely that, due to children's natural curiosity, they would often be endangering their lives, as described by a key informant:

They see a hole [where the zinc pieces join] they want to put the fingers in there and they get hurt (KI-10, Community leader).

This safety anxiety was worsened by the threat of shacks catching fire, as indicated by a parent:

The major reason for not wanting the shack is because the fire can start anytime and because if the fire is there you can't stop it... because of the material, in some places what they put there is papers... [Furthermore] there is no way of keeping the shack warm, if you bring in the paraffin heaters, that is another danger to children (FG-P2).

The constant need for repair of the shacks was vividly expressed by the key informants:

After like three months bababa [making a hammering sound] on the door. After two months dadada [hammering] on the roof. Because the zinc pieces are falling apart and you need to hammer or put some nails in to hold them together ... (KI-8, Community leader).

When it was a shack every time after two years renovation needed to be done because the material... planks and wood have been damaged by rain... (KI-6, Principal).

Thus this situation described here of inadequate and unsafe facilities prior to the placement of the containers is in line with BLA's assessments. In providing the justification for its intervention, BLA observes that there is a terrible shortage of decent preschool facilities in the country, many of the existing facilities having inadequate classrooms, while others "are no more than a single leaky shack" (BLA, 2012:1). Furthermore, the physically unsafe structures prohibit such centres from qualifying for government grants and services. A safe physical structure is a necessary prerequisite for registration. As indicated by Harrison (2012), public money follows the facility rather than the educational needs of young children. Thus an improvement to ECD facilities was necessary if the early learning experience was to make a long term difference to the lives of the children. As argued by Ebrahim (2012:5), "you don't want to squeeze vulnerable children into an environment that further marginalises their development potential".

b) Availability of safe and healthy child care facilities

A comparative advantage of the containers, and the solidity of their structure, over shacks was very clear from the responses of key participants with regard to both physical safety for the children as well as safety from fires and theft:

Safety? It is of course the container? You see there is no nails sticking out here ... In a shack when you walking, one thing you keep watching out for are the nails, they are always tearing your clothes or making cuts on your skin if you go close... (KI-8, Community leader).

We can also talk about safety from the fire and from injury from the shack. Since it was built from wood and loose iron sheets, it was too much injuries at that time. All the time we were worried because you come back and meet your child has injuries from the nails and other things, but now it is safe and solid (FG-N3).

This is fine because it has electricity which can keep the place nicely warm and the heaters using electricity are not as dangerous as the ones using paraffin (KI-2, Community leader).

Crucial to note in terms of providing quality child care and early learning, is the finding that the container classrooms have made a significant difference to the communities in which they were placed by providing a safe and healthy childcare facility. It is clearly evident from the literature that sites in areas with a high index of multiple deprivations, such as those in Khayelitsha and Philippi, serve children who are faced with a number of risks associated with

poverty (HSRC, 2010). This is confirmed by a study whose findings indicated that “residing in a low-income neighbourhood was associated with higher rates of child injury, likely due in part to unsafe play areas within the home” (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000:326, citing Durkin et al., 1994). This is echoed by the Unicef report that “Facilities with inadequate or poor infrastructure present a health and safety risk to children attending ECD” (Unicef, 2010:58). Furthermore, the participants’ depiction of the safety and health situation of the centres when they were using shacks for classrooms underlines the importance of the research findings that the container classrooms have contributed immeasurably to the safety and health of the children attending ECD.

c) Resource for community activities

One factor that emerged from the study was that the communities in which the container facilities have been placed were in large part, deficient in terms of facilities and resources. The community members often turn to the educare centres as facilities for their activities:

Yes, there is a benefit because for the community, this is like the only place they have. Sometimes when the community don’t have place to sit in, maybe they want to have a meeting, they come and ask to use the container. You can imagine if all the time they would have a meeting they all go to Ruth First where there is a community hall, it would be difficult. This serves us a lot (KI-10, Community leader).

... You see in this area we don’t have a hall, where to hold gatherings. Sometimes we have good programmes ... when we have something we just come here because the hall that is available is far from us. So our activities here like AGMs and other meetings for sections are held here... (KI-3, Community leader).

... we don’t have like place to do our community things. Also the youth doesn’t have anything here; the youth they must stand outside to do their meetings so if they come here they can use the container. It becomes like a centre where the community can have common activities or a meeting point (FG-P1).

Key informants confirmed that they use the container classrooms for community activities. What emerged clearly was that different groups within the communities hold their meetings at the ECD centres as highlighted under 4.3.2 (activities undertaken in the container classrooms). In addition to holding meetings in the container classrooms, the communities use the centres for various events. A teacher at one of the centres indicated that this was not an educational facility for the children enrolled in the ECD programme only, but also older children who go to the centre for afterschool care programmes, such as reading, assistance in doing their homework, life skills and as a rehearsal centre:

The afterschool care, you know the children who are in school? They are using the container when they are participating or having something on holidays when the schools are closed... And

there are some that are doing life skills with the aftercare teacher... They are doing drama, some are doing poetry, some are doing music (KI-5, Teacher).

...children also sometimes have sketches which they perform in different places and sometimes in schools, they come here to do their practices... (KI-1, Community leader).

Other community activities mentioned as taking place in the containers were graduation ceremonies and parties:

When, like last year we were having a graduation, the parents were inside the container. So that is another benefit because we have a space ... we don't have to go out and look for other venues... we just remove a few things from the container and arrange it differently and we can have many people inside (KI-4, Teacher).

It's also the public holiday activities, like when it's the Heritage Day. They use the containers; the parents will be there, the community members will be there to watch the kids perform (KI-5, Teacher).

...even people who have weddings come to the principal and ask to use it, they decorate the place and it looks different from the way you see it now because it is a wedding and chairs are brought in which elders can use. So many things, I can put it this way... (KI-1, Community leader).

Key informants in this research also saw the presence of container classrooms as facilitating the economic upliftment of the members of the community. Because parents feel comfortable to leave their children at the educare centres; they can “go out and look for jobs” (KI-3, Community leader). Furthermore, participants saw the container classrooms as having the potential to contribute to economic activity within the community if only they could be made available for skills development programmes as well as offering working space for older ladies who travel far to get such opportunities:

We need the containers for the skills because many people are going up and down they got nothing to do but if we got, we can make sewing. Many things we can learn; sewing, learn to cook, many things we can do (FG-P2).

Despite the widely expressed opinion on the part of both community members and the literature on ECD centres, that the centres were and should be used for various community activities, a small number of key informants were of the view that no activities other than those involving children should take place at the centres, pointing out ways in which children's safety could be compromised:

No, the community got no business here... See madam ... [name of Principal] is the owner of this place and she wants it kept nicely for the children so the community have no place here ... No one is allowed even to pass through because the children have to be safe in here. During the time children are here they must lock the gate because these are other people's children so they must be kept safe. Principal is strict on that, the gate to be locked all the time and the tata will be at the gate to see who is coming in (KI-9, Community leader).

Another informant saw the potential for damage being caused to the container and its resources should it be made available for uses other than childcare and early learning:

Adults should not use it because others make fighting and other things and then they smash the things for children... we know elders can destroy things and not care so we must keep this one only for the children who are enrolled here at this centre (KI-2, Community leader).

Although two of the participating principals were more open to community activities taking place at the centres, one was not very happy and said she would rather keep the facilities for children only. She felt it was the community pushing for this use of the containers when it was actually not meant to be the case:

...but it is known that this container was requested only for the crèche, nothing else... It was not to be used for meetings or anything else, but the community itself, who are parents, are the ones who want to use it. Breadline didn't mention that it can be used for other things, as I said the container was requested for crèche the community itself decided to use the container to attend meetings (KI-6, Principal).

Educare centres have been described as spaces where broader community development activities are hosted and facilitated, in addition to childcare and early learning (Penn, 2004). Ebrahim, Killian & Rule (2011), in their survey of ECD service providers across the country, illustrate that ECD centres in poor communities have multiple uses including providing space for development projects. According to these authors; “This was especially important given the lack of services, infrastructure and ECD centres” (Ebrahim, Killian & Rule, 2011:388). Therefore, the provision of container classrooms not only contributes to ECD, but to the enablement of community initiatives. Although there are more studies suggesting multiple usage (Penn, 2004; Motala, 2010 and Ebrahim, Killian & Rule, 2011), an audit for ECD in the Western Cape found that the larger percentage of ECD facilities (63.7%) used their buildings for ECD services only, while 36.1% “use these buildings for purposes that range from various educational classes for various age groups to extra-mural activities like ballet, beading, faith-based group meetings and senior citizen gatherings” (DSD, 2009:41). It is clear that the ECD facilities also serve as resources for community activities.

4.3.4 Challenges experienced by those using container classrooms for ECD

Exploring beneficiary perceptions about the use of container classrooms for ECD included understanding some of the challenges that arise with the use of the container facilities. This study established challenges that were related to container facilities as well as those that pertain to the general running of the ECD centres. It emerged that challenges were linked to the maintenance of the containers, the inflexibility of the structure to modification, as well as intermittent funding.

a) Maintenance of the container classrooms

The study established that all the participating centres had challenges with the maintenance requirements of the container classrooms. Almost all key informants mentioned that the containers leaked and required mending. This complaint featured with particular frequency due to the fact that the study was conducted during winter when it was raining continually, and during which time it might have featured as a pressing issue. Although one centre indicated having had the problem of a leaking roof since the time the container was given to the centre, the problem had developed at the other two centres over a long period, and was attributed to rust and general deterioration. This recurring problem was confirmed by the majority of key informants:

... the first time these containers came here, they were not new, they were used before. So maybe they didn't see there's a leak on top of the containers. From that time they brought the containers, when we see okay the containers have a leakage on top; we tried to put this roof on top [pointing to the roof which has an additional layer of iron sheets]. They are still leaking but now I can't say they are coming from the top but it seems that in all the places where the containers were joined together there is holes... (KI-1, Community leader).

You see, the problem we have with containers are leakages, there are holes on top (KI-11, Principal).

I think it's because of nine years that we have it here but before that we didn't have problem with that container. But it comes now because it's been long we using this... (KI-15, Teacher).

No before they say it had only tiny holes so it was not bad at all. Now I think because of many years, rain and rust, it got old and the holes are many and bigger so it makes it difficult now to keep the place dry. They always tell us when it is raining they can't do much with the children because they have to keep them together in some warm places and leave the wet ones (FG-M5).

Key informants also raised the issue of rust as a challenge. Delivered with a flat roof that allows water to collect; the containers require constant de-rusting and painting if the life of the container is to be prolonged. A focus group member said:

And also the water is making the rust on the zinc, we are scared maybe anytime they can fall into pieces, we don't know. We are just scared, maybe lack of maintenance. But as a community we are trying to make like these containers look right like painting them ourselves... (FG-M3).

Another community member expressed a need for assistance in maintaining the container:

Like if we can have the paint as these containers came here we buy the paint and other equipment to keep it well, we paint and varnish and we do it ourselves. That is the challenges we have. We need assistance, even Breadline Africa itself if they can assist us with other things like money or other materials we can do better than we are doing now (KI-1, Community leader)

Although the wooden floor used in the containers was generally considered suitable for ECD classrooms, one centre had encountered the challenge of keeping rodents from gnawing the wood, as some parents explained during a focus group discussion:

And the floors. We have rats, big rats called abagundwana [Xhosa] they eat wood (FG-M1).

I think you can change the floors in the container maybe. I don't know... but not wood (FG-M2).

A community leader from the same area pointed to the weakness in the floor as a result of the eating away of some parts of the wood:

... the floor it's not good. Boom, boom, boom [stamping foot]. Yeah. It can be broken anytime (KI-8, Community leader).

Thus the major challenges with the structure were in regard to rusting roofs, decaying wooden floors and rodents.

b) Inflexibility with regards to modifications

With a 6x2.5m container classroom, a limited number of children can be taken in, and if that number is exceeded, there is no way of expanding the container to make room for the extra children. At centre P, the children had to be moved back to a shack because the container classroom became too small to accommodate all the children. On the other hand, those classrooms made to accommodate many children presented other problematic situations. As explained earlier, at one of the participating centres, the container classroom is a big hall-like structure made by joining two 12x2.5m containers together. Although the space, or floor area, is more than adequate, the classroom presents challenges in terms of handling the different age groups that attend ECD there. For example, as one teacher explained:

Yes, it is good but, it is not good because, this container...there is, babies ney, Pre-Grade R and toddlers. When we teaching the toddlers or pre-Grade R, the babies were disturbed, they can't sleep and they begin crying. And again the bigger children in pre-grade R, it disturb the toddlers and fight them. It is not easy to have them all in one place and they all need attention (KI-4, Teacher).

c) Intermittent funding

All three centres that were part of this study were registered with the DSD, and therefore entitled to the government subsidy. However, receiving these funds on a regular basis emerged as a challenge to the educare centres, as well as a Catch-22 situation, because of the intermittent nature of the funding. This makes it difficult for the centres to meet their monthly financial obligations, such as paying teachers and buying food for the children.

In terms of subsidy, they always ask us to comply with the standards, but they should be consistence with paying of subsidy. How can you comply if you are not getting your things as you are supposed to get. Up until last Friday we were sitting in those offices, because they pay you, they don't pay me, they pay the next one. Yet we are doing the same thing ... but if we don't push, we don't get any services (KI-11, Principal).

A Principal explained the difficulties in meeting teachers' salaries due to the combination of the delays in getting the subsidies as well as the non-payment of fees by some parents:

But many times ney? The teachers, 3 months goes by without them getting paid because some of the parents stay without paying fees because some of them get 200 and something from child support grant...If she does not pay and you know that she didn't pay because she is not working, definitely she has bought something to eat for them in the house because of unemployment, do you understand our situation? (KI-17, Principal).

The centres running Grade R have an added problem with getting funding. Although registered under the department of education in addition to being registered with the DSD, funding for Grade R, which comes from the DoE does not meet essential components of an ECD:

I can tell you we have lots of challenges. This centre is registered at the department of social development and in the department of Education, but the criteria of working with their funds differs a lot. Social development would break up their subsidy towards food, running cost and some percentage to help on teachers' salaries. This is a little bit difficult because some of the parents that we cater for are unemployed. Now their policy says we need to take from the school fees and add on to this percentage in order for you to pay the teachers... Department of Education are not funding us, they are funding the grade R teachers, because 80% of the subsidy goes to the grade R teacher's salary and then the 20% is for running cost, you cannot buy food from department of Education's money. While we take our children from 7am to 5pm, we don't send those children home at 12 o'clock because there is nobody home, otherwise it will be encouraging these rapes and sexual abuse of the children. So they don't seem to understand that we need to feed these children, yes we do, because we can't say you are a grade R you cannot eat. While she sees that others are eating that is one challenge that we get with the department of education (KI-17, Principal).

As observed by Sherry & Draper (2012:7), "Finance continues to be a contentious issue in ECD provision, with DoSD [Department of Social Development] subsidisation ... covering only part of daily provision costs..." The strategy is that the centres cover the other costs from fees charged. This becomes problematic in underprivileged areas such as Khayelitsha and Philippi, both with high levels of unemployment and low wage occupations. The likelihood is high that parents in such areas would not consistently pay fees. As noted by Ebrahim, Killian & Rule (2011), it then becomes difficult for managers to pay ECD practitioners a steady stipend, a situation alluded to above by a Principal who said teachers go for as long as 3 months without pay.

In addition, the issue of fees "means that the poorest families continue to be unable to enrol their children" (Sherry & Draper, 2012:7). These children will not have the opportunity to develop their capabilities and as a result "they do poorly, drop out of school and are likely to continue the cycle of poverty" (Evans, 1997:18). This validates the position that children from households with unemployed parents are most likely to experience unemployment themselves and this may follow multiple generations (United Nations, 2007). This in turn involves the consideration of the human security approach, which holds poverty as the

ultimate systemic threat to young people, and calls for measures to protect them from such threats to life as unemployment (UNDP, 1994; Camdessus, 2000 as cited by Thomas, 2001). In this context, initiatives such as the BLA container project serve as potential means to combat these threats, particularly in vulnerable communities that are not able to fund the construction of an ECD facility to serve the community.

4.3.5 Future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms

The following section indicates what was considered essential to the enhancement of the use of the container classrooms.

a) Provision of bigger container classrooms

The lack of space was a prominent issue in this research. Although there was a general appreciation among informants that container classrooms were bigger than the shack structures that were used previously, the centres still wished they could get bigger and separate container classrooms for the different age groups, and to enhance their children's creativity. This idea was dominant among principals and teachers:

...we want to group children. We want babies, with their own rooms. Their own container I mean (KI-4, Teacher).

We need more space; we need more containers so that we can take more children and as I said earlier we can also start on grade 1... The little ones, middle ones and bigger ones, they all need a space which is separate from the others (KI-16, Teacher).

I hope I can get a bigger container with more space, you know, so that we can display learning areas (KI-11, Principal).

If Breadline Africa can have resources to extend or open up the container a little bit because the children are much more now, plus or minus 50 and each time there's more children coming it won't be only the 50. I am sure the principal will mention that she can't take more than 50 because of the space... (FG-N3).

For the community leaders, the idea of having more space for child care and early learning was largely expressed in terms of support for enhancing the use of the existing facilities for community related activities:

I said many things we can do here if we had a few additional containers, we don't have community hall here so this can turn like a community project and we can do many more things than just the crèche (KI-18, Community leader).

Yes, we all agree that we need an extension of the facility, it is too small. We have ideas that we saw from the Methodist church where youngsters use dance and other art and culture activities so we have been talking about having it for our community here and we plan to hold such activities here (KI-3, Community leader).

The plea for bigger classroom space speaks to the current situation in South Africa where a larger number of children are catered for in community and home-based sites compared to centre-based services. According to The Presidency (2009:74), by year 2009, 57% were enrolled in community-based sites, 24% in home-based sites while 19% in school-based sites. Overcrowding is therefore a likelihood because the centres could be the only ones in the area; since as noted by Martin (2012), provision of ECD programmes in vulnerable communities depends on existing capital within communities. Furthermore, it could as well be that with improved infrastructure in the form of container classrooms, the centres attract more parents enrolling their children at the much safer facilities.

b) Providing other facilities required at an educare centre

The findings also show that the provision of container facilities at the centres was by no means done in a uniform or consistent manner. For example, the participating centres all had different structures: centre N had a big classroom made from joining 2, 12x2.5m containers; centre M had two classrooms provided as separate structures, while centre P had a 6x2.5m classroom, 6x2.5 toilet facility, and a 12x2.5m container kitchen. At the centres with only container classrooms, a need was expressed for other essential facilities as a way of enhancing the use and benefits of the container classroom. For example, a teacher and a principal at centre N aired similar sentiments about these needs:

We would be happy to have the toilets inside, everything inside, kitchen inside. We don't like to always use the kitchen at the Principal's house ... We want our kitchen inside the crèche... (KI-4, Teacher).

If I would have resources I would make the container a double storey. You know I can use the downstairs for the little ones ... expand on that to get even a kitchen in the crèche so that we stop using my kitchen at home that would be good ney? ...you see, my kitchen is too small (KI-6, Principal).

These findings validate the position held by Sherry & Draper (2012) that supporting infrastructure at ECD centres is variable. The participating centres all had different levels of infrastructural needs. Centres N and M only received container classrooms but not toilet facilities. This is the case for the more than 40% ECD facilities that a Unicef study indicated had no flush toilets (Unicef, 2012). A separate kitchen is definitely a requirement for a childcare facility that needs to provide nutrition as part of its services.

c) Creating a stimulating environment around the container

The key informants in this research did not see the container facilities as separate from the rest of the learning environment at the centres. As a strategy to enhance the educational use of containers, the participants indicated the need to have an outdoor space that would complement the stimulating activities being done inside the containers. Suggestions that came up included having play space with recreational equipment as well as maintaining a clean and secure space:

There is nothing beautiful out here to make the place nice for the children. They must have nice swings, there isn't. There used to be one but its long broken ... now the children just run around (KI-7, Teacher).

I need to improve my outdoor, like jungle gyms and the swings. It's not good quality swings outside (KI-6, Principal).

Like more things like for children to play yeah ... you know you sometime come they are having a break others they are fighting for things like no it's my things it's my things (KI-8, Community leader).

I think we can paint it, clean it, make it very nice ... The lawn also needs to be made nice so that the children have no dust blowing around as they play. Just to make a nice playground for the kids so that when you come next to take us photos they will be looking very nice (FG-N1).

The other thing is the space outside is too small. This is not a yard where children can play, all space is taken up and the gate too is not tight... a child can just sneak out and this worries me because as a parent I can sit at home thinking the child is by the crèche meanwhile she/he has gone wondering outside (FG-N5).

The availability of developmentally appropriate learning and play materials, as well as the arrangement of child-centred activities form part of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS] (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1997 as cited by Loeb et al., 2004:5). The expressed need of the key informants for an environment that is stimulating to the child is central to any ECD strategy. If the container classrooms are to enhance early learning for the children in the communities in which they are placed; corresponding attention needs to be given to the play space around them. This means that the environment should be visually appealing and stimulating, “with close attention paid to spaces, materials, colours, light, microclimate and furnishings” (Miller & Pound, 2010:10). This is affirmed by Piaget’s cognitive developmental theory which holds that “cognitive development is the result of an interaction between the individual and the environment” (Oates, 1994:31). Play enables the child to engage with the world “through exploration, manipulation, physical exuberance, experimentation and pretence, either alone or with others” (Bartlett, 1999:68). Additionally, play has the potential to stimulate children to move their bodies “providing practice in

coordinating movement and processing the sensory input ... children learn gross motor skills, fine motor skills, eye–hand coordination, visual perceptual skills and other skills” (Unicef, 2007:13).

d) Modifying the structures

The study identified the need to modify some aspects/parts of the container structures. The first was the roof which was indicated by informants as a problem because of leakages and rust. Since the containers were delivered with a flat roof, water collected on top of the container, which led to the development of rust and to leakages. All the key informants indicated the need to change this and suggested putting a slanting roof on the container to allow for the drainage of water. In fact, centre N, which had experienced the problem from the time the container was placed at the centre, had put a slanting roof over the facility, although they still experienced leakages through the windows, doors and the areas where the containers were joined. The leakage problem was an almost universal complaint:

In the container only one problem we got is when it is raining the water is stuck there because the containers are flat. Slanting the roof is the solution because a flat roof like this, the water can stay there and make rust there (KI-17, Principal).

You see like that one now on top like it's ruined everything the rains falling through yoh! Like ideas of slanting it a bit is great because like the water should not stay on top for maybe like 2 days or 3 days long (KI-8, Community leader).

The leakage needs to be sorted out and doors need repairs. I think, when they make iconainer ney, they must know that when it's raining... it's not going to get the rain inside. When the times go on, it's going to be, igetting rust on iroof, make holes on top, then the rain come inside because it's flat... (KI-15, Teacher).

...it's got holes now you see because 17 years is a long time so now we need something else. Or maybe they can cover it the top only... (KI-6, Principal).

The other aspect that emerged in terms of modifications was the need to make the container facilities adaptable to weather conditions. As it was, the containers were cold and required some alternative means of keeping the children warm. Moveable heaters which were in use in the classrooms also posed a safety hazard. Suggestions ranged from having built-in heaters and air conditioners, to insulating the containers. Understandably, this issue was raised particularly by parents during focus group discussions, as well as by teachers who spend most time in these containers:

The walls are very cold, they are I think made of only iron, it needs to be covered with something (FG-N4).

Yes it needs to be covered with 'BX' [not really clear] so that the wall is thick and warm (FG-N2).

There is that kind of strong paint which is used so that walls can keep warmth, put it on the outside, they call it 'wall on wall' and it keeps the rooms very hot (FG-N1).

And also have aircon inside the container. And also have a heater if it's winter... like built-in heaters. So it's like an aircon, it's two-in-one, cold and hot (FG-M4).

Additionally, the research established that container classrooms were all placed on a raised standard with steps/stairs to get to the door way. This makes accessibility problematic for children with disabilities. This could explain why all the three centres indicated not having any child with disabilities enrolled at the centres. Centre N, the only centre with a paved path from the gate, also had steps to the door, which precluded a physically handicapped child who moved to an institution. It was therefore stated that accessibility needed to be improved in order to be user friendly to children with special needs:

To make it better we can make a nice paving not steps for children so that even those on a wheel chair can go in... that frame there is a little bit high and if a child is walking using crutches, he/she can just fall there (KI-12, Teacher).

We suppose to keep in mind that there are people who need to access the place say by wheel chair. We should put something to walk on very nice, it must not be steps; we must make it level so that we can move the wheel chair. Just now it has steps which should be changed (FG-N1).

... we tried to cater for disability children, as you see there, the wheelchair can go through, in-out so the facility is good (KI-6, Principal).

This study also brought to the fore the importance of keeping the children in mind during the container conversion process. One principal pointed out that the boards that had been fitted into the container were very useful but too high for the children for whom the classroom was meant. To enhance usage of the container classrooms therefore, the fixtures needed to be user friendly for the children:

Oh there is something like a board in the container... but it is too high for kids, it would be better if it could be lower than where it is... If Breadline Africa can put something like a board that can be at the children's level so they can put the... what's that? The posters... (KI-6, Principal).

The findings on required modification of the physical structures are very important in enhancing usage of the container classrooms. A consideration for an altered, slanting and more expansive roof, not only protects children from heat as suggested by Alter (2012) and Holloway (2012) but is needed to protect the container getting rusty and eventually leaky. BLA could also consider Holloway's (2012) recommendation of insulating the container facility so that both the heat and cold conditions are addressed.

e) Stakeholder participation in the management of the facilities

There was a clear indication that the educare centres were not financially self-sustaining and that, in order to enhance the use of the container facilities, and to be able to maintain them adequately and cater for other needs, there was a need for wider participation of the parents of the children, of community leaders and NGOs, as well as government departments. Additionally, the importance of keeping in contact with BLA, the organisation that donated the container facilities, was also advanced as a vital aspect in the quest for the enhanced utilisation of the container classrooms and for accessing other services:

The community can help in terms of fundraising and donations, although it is difficult for some as they are unemployed, some depend on social grants and cannot afford; some are even lazy to attend meeting and that becomes a challenge. Social Development helps us every month by feeding children and with our salaries and the community with fees to add more on our salaries. Department of Education helps with the equipment and on the other side with salaries in Grade R (KI-11, Principal).

Like I said, the only thing that can help us if we can have maybe the NGOs but I think we are trying to write letters to other NGOs and businesses like shoprite, lottery, I mean all the NGOs and government departments (KI-1, Community leader).

Social Development is helping us with money to buy the food and pay the Teachers. Education they support a grade R class. And in that money you pay Teacher and you buy some toys to pay for things you can't use for other things they are very specific (KI-17, Principal).

With regards to BLA, the key informants from two centres indicated that they were not in contact with BLA, with the exception of centre P, which was in constant communication with BLA, and had received more facilities over a period of time. Participants expressed an expectation that BLA would offer on-going support in maintaining and improving the containers as centres of child care and early learning, as well as providing other services. It also emerged that the communities saw a possibility that BLA would assist in linking them up with other service providers including government departments:

... we need, if Breadline Africa can give us something to make this containers, if they can help us as a community, give us the equipment to fix all these small matters we have now, we can do it as a community... if Breadline Africa can have another container to give to the centre, for us we can extend the structure I think it can add more to the community (KI-1, Community leader).

As now as we talk, I can say if we have the contacts of Breadline Africa, we can contact them to thank them for the structure they have given us and at the same time we can ask if there are other ways the organisation can help us. If we can come together and have a discussion and maybe we can come up with another plan (KI-16, Teacher).

No we haven't been in communication with BLA since we did not meet them when they brought the container we don't know how to get hold of them. Maybe Breadline Africa can help us to do these things I have been talking about, come to us with the paint and to close the leaking and to make nice the place for the children to play, at the back and the front make very nice, Breadline Africa can do that for us (KI-2, Community leader).

Maybe Breadline Africa must give us a chance to come to their offices to talk with them so that they make appointment for community committee to talk together like today. As community we must ask Breadline Africa to make a plan for us how to reach government offices. When we try we don't get any responses so it is difficult for us to just get up and go to the offices (KI-18, Community leader).

Integration of ECD services provided by different departments as well as wider participations of stakeholders from the private sector, NGOs and CBOs is emphasised as a key strategy to ensuring that “conditions are created for the optimum development of all children and their families through the provision and support of appropriate services” (DSD, 2006:13). This is also at the heart of the NIP-ECD which came up as a response to the “fragmented and uncoordinated service provision in the ECD sector” where different departments addressed young children’s needs using sector-specific policies and legislation (RSA, 2005:6). Bringing different stakeholders on board is a great need and would serve as a resource for these centres. Stakeholder commitment to ECD needs to be promoted so that the full potential of the educare centres operating from the container facilities can be realised.

4.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented a profile of all the study participants and a cogent framework for discussing the findings. The study findings provided many insights central to the research objectives. Relevant discussion and analysis was enhanced through references made to other authors writing on matters pertaining to containers and ECD. The following chapter will present the main conclusions and recommendations emanating from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

This chapter outlines the main conclusions drawn from the research findings. These are presented in relation to the objectives that guided the study. The section also offers recommendations arising both from available literature on ECD provisioning in South Africa and from the outcomes of the study.

5.1 Main Conclusions

Objective 1: *To investigate the use of containers as classrooms with regard to the activities undertaken in them.* The main conclusions drawn from participants' perceptions were:

- All key informants and focus group members indicated that the container classrooms donated by BLA to ECD centres are used primarily as childcare facilities where children are looked after while their parents/guardians are able to work.
- The ECD centres prepare children for entry into the formal school system, giving them a stimulating early learning environment.
- In addition to the primary use of the container facilities for ECD services, all participants said the containers are also used as multi-purpose community resources serving the wider community in terms of space to hold meetings, prayers, celebrations and some of the educational needs of older community members.
- A large number of key informants wished the containers could be used for more activities than was the case at the time of the research. Some suggested activities were: academic benefits (a library, adult education, computer lessons and after school care); recreational space for youth; and as a soup kitchen.
- Although the majority of participants were in favour of the use of container classrooms for community activities, one Principal, one community leader and one member of a focus group objected to the idea and would rather have the containers used only for purposes of ECD.
- The facilities are generally considered suitable in comparison to the shacks that were previously used. The containers are more durable, safe and healthy and are able to provide space for stimulating activities essential to the development of young children.

- However, the teacher participants felt the container classrooms were not entirely appropriate for children, particularly in winter. The containers were said to be too cold for the children and also had leaking roofs.

Objective 2: *To understand ECD teachers and key informants' perceptions on the difference that container classroom(s) have made to the community in which they are situated.* The majority of key informants and focus group members indicated:

- All participants indicated that the containers have made a significant difference to the communities by firstly aiding the communities to upgrade from using make-shift structures that posed a constant risk of injury, fire and damage from adverse weather conditions. Thus the container classrooms represent a welcome solution to the problems of unsafe, inappropriate and inadequate structures/infrastructure from where ECD services are generally offered to children in low socio-economic communities.
- It was unanimously argued that the containers offer a safer and healthier alternative for childcare and early learning, and have made a difference to the communities in terms of the benefit of having their children taken care of in facilities that are more supportive of child development.
- The community leaders emphasised that the containers provide a valuable resource to the infrastructure deficient communities. Since these communities have no other alternatives available, they also use the facility for community-related activities which would otherwise possibly not take place.
- The centres that received only container classrooms continued to be in dire need of supporting infrastructure in the form of a kitchen and toilets.

Objective 3: *To enquire about the challenges experienced by those using container classrooms.* Participants indicated that:

- Despite being a welcome solution to the problem of inadequate infrastructure, all the participating centres had challenges with the maintenance requirements of the container classrooms.
- Almost all key informants mentioned that the containers leaked and required mending. Flat roof containers lead to rusting because of poor drainage and this also leads to leaking.
- At two centres, the wooden floors were rotting while one centre experienced the challenge of keeping rodents, prevalent in the area, from gnawing the wood.

- The containers were not amenable to modifications to suit different age-related needs of children.
- In terms of management, the centres – all of which are registered and receive a government subsidy – are affected by the inconsistent disbursement of the funds, thus affecting the daily running of the centres as well as the livelihoods of those working at the centres.

Objective 4: *To establish ECD teachers and key informants' perceptions on future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms.* The main conclusions are:

- The use of the container classrooms can be enhanced through the provision of bigger classrooms to cater for the different age groups that attend ECD services; the provision of supporting facilities such as toilets and separate kitchen; the creation of a stimulating play space around the container; addressing the structural problems identified; and allowing for greater stakeholder participation in the running of the centres.
- Putting up a structure in itself will not answer all the needs for effective ECD, a number of supportive stakeholder strategies are needed to enhance the usage of the containers as ECD centres.

5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations are presented under three categories: recommendations for further research, recommendations for BLA management, and those for the Department of Social Development (DSD).

5.2.1 Further Research

The researcher recommends that:

A country-wide, mixed method research be conducted in order to develop comprehensive knowledge of the extent of use of container facilities, the role players promoting the container classroom facility and the experiences of a wider representative sample. The mixed method approach could generate both quantitative and qualitative data while a country-wide sample would ensure a representative sample of the areas in South Africa where BLA, and indeed other role players, have placed containers. Furthermore, such a study will provide much-needed information since research in this area is lacking.

5.2.2 Breadline Africa Management

It is recommended that BLA should consider the following:

- Clarifying to receiving centres/communities BLA's role after the placement of the containers, particularly with regards to maintenance issues.
- Re-establishing contact with centres that received container facilities in BLA's earlier years and are no longer in touch with the organisation. This will provide the means of evaluating the success of the interventions and develop 'best practice' models for future interventions.
- Developing a monitoring system that allows for regular information flow from beneficiaries on the condition of the container facilities and feedback on the benefits of using such containers. This will ensure that BLA keeps in contact with its beneficiaries and tracks the impact of the intervention.
- Developing an advocacy programme that could lobby relevant authorities on other vital needs of the container recipients that are not provided by BLA. In this way BLA could be a conduit for further development of these communities.
- Adapting existing container structures to make them more user-friendly and enable them to withstand weather conditions. Such adaptations and improvements would include installing an additional slanting roof -for effective drainage- over the container's flat roof as well as insulation. Notwithstanding the cost implications, the long term benefits of durability, fewer or less frequent maintenance issues and a suitable atmosphere for educare would outweigh the costs.
- Providing other/additional supporting facilities, as is the case at centre P, in the form of a fully equipped container kitchen and container toilet facilities so that these facilities complement the benefits of the container classroom.
- Providing training in maintenance, with its other possibilities for employability.

5.2.3 The Department of Social Development

Based on the theoretical frameworks used in this study, it is recommended that the DSD considers the following:

- Investing substantially in ECD infrastructure in low socio-economic communities to empower vulnerable children to access their educational rights. This will further offer opportunities for the development of the capabilities of the children who would otherwise be exposed to poor early learning opportunities.

- Reviewing the policy of subsidising children in registered ECD sites only so that the most vulnerable children, who are those most likely to be in unregistered facilities, can be protected from the threat of childhood developmental lag, unemployment in the future and other social problems as outlined by the human security paradigm.
- Developing a checklist against which to test policies targeted at ECD which conform to the rights of the child and which incorporates tenets of social inclusion and human security.

5.3 Summary statement

The study has explored perceptions of beneficiaries of the BLA's container classrooms used for ECD. It investigated the activities for which the containers are used; the difference that the facilities have made to the communities in which they are used; the challenges encountered in their use and the strategies that could enhance their usage. With a focus on Philippi and Khayelitsha, this research has deepened understanding of BLA's intervention in the two areas and opened up an area for further investigation.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Schedule for Principals and Teachers

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
Department of Social Development

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

Title of research project

Exploring beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for Early Childhood Development in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape

INTRODUCTION

Researcher introduces self, explains what the research is about and contracts around ethical considerations (confidentiality, recording, voluntary participation, and publishing of findings). Researcher invites participant to give biographical details using the data sheet provided and to complete the consent form as an indication that they have freely consented to participating in the research.

OBJECTIVE ONE

| |
|--|
| The use of containers as classrooms with regard to the activities undertaken in them |
|--|

1. Are you aware of how many containers Breadline Africa gave to this centre? (If yes, how many and how do you feel about this?)
2. Could you please tell me what the container(s) is/are used for? (/What activities are done/take place in there,- explore wider community access and usage)
3. How suitable is this/are these structure(s) for the activities taking place in it/them? (Please explain by giving examples)
4. What would you say about the space in the container classroom(s) in relation to the number of children using it/them?
5. In which ways do you think these containers are a benefit to the community?
6. In your opinion are these containers being put to a good use? Please elaborate
7. Are you aware of any conditions placed on the use of these containers by Breadline Africa?
8. How else could these containers be used? (Give examples of what you think it could be used for)

OBJECTIVE TWO

The difference that container classrooms have made to the community in which they are situated

1. How long has this/have these container(s) been in use in this community? (Describe what it was like BEFORE these containers were here)
2. What process was followed to get Breadline Africa involved in this project?
3. Who came up with the idea of having a container classroom(s)? (Do you think that this is a good idea and why?)
4. Could you kindly share with me how the community/parents participated in the establishment of container classrooms at this centre? (Describe the process, the various meetings etc)
5. Describe the previous structure that existed (if it did) and if there was no previous structure describe the present container/s (explore).
6. In which way has this container contributed to the development of early learning for children? (Explore how they see the importance of early learning for children).
7. In which way is the container facility user friendly for the children that are presently using it (describe –give examples)
8. How could this container be adapted to children who are handicapped and may not be able to move around as freely as the others (give some ideas)
9. How would you describe the environment that has been created by the container? (Safety, health, learning, physical, care)
10. How would you describe your working relationship with Breadline Africa and other stakeholders? (Have there been follow up visits or other services since the container(s) was/were delivered?).
11. (If the centre is not registered) How could one meet conditions for registration with the department of social development? (please explain)
12. (If registered) How was the registration process? (describe the conditions for registration and whether the s container facility made a difference)

OBJECTIVE THREE

Challenges experienced by those using container classrooms

1. Could you kindly share with me the challenges associated with having a container facility? (Please explain and give examples).
2. Describe those challenges that need to be addressed urgently (give explanations why you think this is crucial)
3. In which ways could some of these challenges be meaningfully addressed (give examples)

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms

1. What plans are there to improve the use of this container facility?
2. How will these plans be achieved (give explanations)n

3. What do you think should be the role of the community and other stakeholders (parents/community leaders/Breadline Africa, Department of Social Development, Department of Health, Department of Basic Education, Not for Profit Organisations).
4. Are there any other strategies that could be adopted to improve the use of these container classrooms? (give examples)

ENDING

Do you have anything else you would like to share with me?

Thank you so much for your participation and your time.

Appendix 2 – Interview Schedule for Parents and Community Leaders

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN Department of Social Development

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Title of research project

*Exploring beneficiary perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for
Early Childhood Development in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape*

INTRODUCTION

Researcher introduces self, explains what the research is about and contracts around ethical considerations such as confidentiality, recording, voluntary participation, and publishing of findings. Researcher invites participant to give biographical details using the data sheet provided and to complete the consent form as an indication that they have freely consented to participating in the research.

OBJECTIVE ONE

| |
|--|
| The use of containers as classrooms with regard to the activities undertaken in them |
|--|

1. Are you aware of how many containers Breadline Africa gave e to this centre? (If yes, how many and how do you feel about this?)
2. Could you please tell me what the container(s) is/are used for? (/What activities are done/take place in there,- explore wider community access and usage)
3. How suitable are these s structure(s) for the activities taking place in it/them? (Please explain by giving examples)
4. What would you say about the space in the container classroom(s) in relation to the number of children using it/them?
5. In which ways do you think these containers are a benefit to the community?
6. In your opinion are these containers being put to a good use? Please elaborate
7. Are you aware of any conditions placed on the use of these containers by Breadline Africa?
8. How else could these containers be used? (Give examples of what you think it could be used for)

OBJECTIVE TWO

The difference that container classrooms have made to the community in which they are situated

1. Who came up with the idea of having a container classroom(s)? (Do you think that this is a good idea and why?)
2. Could you kindly share with me how the community/parents participated in the establishment of container classrooms at this centre? (Describe the process, the various meetings etc)
3. Describe the previous structure that existed (if it did) and if there was no previous structure describe the present container/s (explore).
4. In which way has this container contributed to the development of early learning for children? (Explore how they see the importance of early learning for children).
5. In which way is the container facility user friendly for the children that are presently using it (describe –give examples)
6. How could this container be adapted to children who are handicapped and may not be able to move around as freely as the others (give some ideas)
7. How would you describe the environment that has been created by the container? (Safety, health, learning, physical, care)
8. How would you describe your working relationship with Breadline Africa and other stakeholders? (Have there been follow up visits or other services since the container(s) was/were delivered?).

OBJECTIVE THREE

Challenges experienced by those using container classrooms

1. Could you kindly share with me the challenges associated with having a container facility? (Please explain and give examples).
2. Describe those challenges that need to be addressed urgently (give explanations why you think this is crucial)
3. In which ways could some of these challenges be meaningfully addressed (give examples)

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms

1. What plans are there to improve the use of this container facility?
2. How will these plans be achieved (give explanations)n
3. What do you think should be the role of the community and other stakeholders (parents/community leaders/Breadline Africa, Department of Social Development, Department of Health, Department of Basic Education, Not for Profit Organisations).
4. Are there any other strategies that could be adopted to improve the use of these container classrooms? (give examples)

ENDING

Do you have anything else you would like to share with me?

Thank you so much for your participation and your time.

Appendix 3 – Sample data sheet

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Please answer the questions in the table below to provide important information about yourself? Either write in the correct answer (e.g. your age) or circle the correct response (e.g. your marital status) as appropriate. If there is a question you do not want to respond to, just leave it blank.

| SEX | Male | | Female | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------|------------------------|
| MARITAL STATUS | Married | Divorced | I live with a partner | Single | Other (please specify) |
| HOME LANGUAGE | English | Afrikaans | English and Afrikaans | Xhosa | Other (please specify) |
| HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED | Grade 12 | Grade 11 | Grade 10 | Grade 9 | Other (please specify) |
| NAME OF COMMUNITY WHERE YOU LIVE | | | | | |
| HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED THERE? | Number of years | | Number of months | | |
| HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN THIS ECD CENTRE | Number of years | | Number of months | | |
| DID YOU KNOW THE ECD CENTRE BEFORE THE CONTAINER CLASSROOM WAS BROUGHT TO THE SITE | Yes | | No | | |

Appendix 4 – Consent form

University of Cape Town Department of Social Development

RESEARCH PROJECT FOR CHRISTINE MWAPE MWPCHR001 - 2013

CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TOPIC

Exploring perceptions about the use of refurbished container classrooms for Early Childhood Development in vulnerable communities in the Western Cape

Research objectives

1. To investigate the use of containers as classrooms with regard to the activities undertaken in them.
1. To understand ECD teachers and key informants' perceptions on the difference that container classroom(s) have made to the community in which they are situated.
2. To enquire about the challenges experienced by those using container classrooms.
3. To establish ECD teachers and key informants' perceptions on future strategies that could enhance the use of container classrooms.

Participant's involvement

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research project, acknowledging that the objectives and nature of the study have been clearly explained to me and an opportunity availed for me to ask any questions I might have.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in the research and can decide to withdraw at any stage.
- I agree to this interview being used for purposes of the research on condition that my privacy is respected.

Name of participant:

Name of researcher:

Signature:

Signature:

Date

Date:

Appendix 5 – Plagiarism Declaration



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN Department of Social Development

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this Research report from the work(s) of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.
3. This project is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
5. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work.

Date:

Signature:

Full Name of Student: